

A TREASURY OF
MYSTIC TERMS



A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART III
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE &
PRACTICE



VOLUME 13

JOHN DAVIDSON

RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS

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EDITED AND LARGELY WRITTEN BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

A Treasury of Mystic Terms has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy, and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

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IN THE COURSE OF COMPILING AND WRITING THE *TREASURY*, the editorial team have drawn on two major sources. Firstly, the scriptures and writings of mystics and others who have written on spiritual and mystical matters. Secondly, the works of scholars concerning these texts and their associated traditions. To all of these, we will be forever grateful. Among the mystics, we owe especial gratitude to the masters of Beas who have been, and who remain, the primary source of spiritual inspiration and perspective for most of the *Treasury*'s editorial team.

Sources of the many citations have been given in the references, endnotes, and bibliography. Among these are some that must receive special mention:

The translations of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translations of S. Radhakrishnan and Swami Tapasyananda.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from English translations endorsed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

For translations of the Buddhist Pali texts, we have made extensive use of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995); *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, tr. Maurice Walshe (1995); *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000); *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012); all published by Wisdom Publications of Somerville, Massachusetts; together with various

translations by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, published by Access to Insight (accesstoinsight.org and dhammatalks.org).

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá, and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux, and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC). The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá*, which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

Particular acknowledgement must be made of the extensive compilation of material made by Dr Javad Nurbakhsh in his 15-volume *Farhang-i Nurbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, translated by Terry Graham *et al.* (1984–2001) as *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*. Dr Nurbakhsh's considerable contribution to Sufi literature has been of great help to us in the compilation of the Sufi entries in the *Treasury*, and we have drawn upon his work, both in the Persian and its English translation. The numerous extracts are reprinted by permission of Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications.

Excerpts from *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, ed. & tr. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (Faber & Faber, London), copyright © by The Eling Trust (1979, 1981, 1984, 1995) are reprinted by permission of Metropolitan Kallistos and The Eling Trust.

Existing dictionaries and encyclopaedias are naturally of great assistance when preparing a work such as the *Treasury*. We gladly acknowledge the particular help we have received from *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, Georg Feuerstein (Paragon House, New York, 1990); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.* (Brill, Leiden, 1960–2005); *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni (Rosen, New York, 2002); *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Daito Shuppansha (Tokyo, 1965); *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms*, Hisao Inagaki (Nagata Bunshodo, Kyoto, 1984); *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, Damien Keown (Oxford University Press, 2003); *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, Ven. Nyanatiloka (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1988); *The*

Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, Robert Buswell & Donald Lopez (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2014); *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, ed. Ernest Klein (Carta Jerusalem, University of Haifa, 1987); *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Judaica Multimedia, Jerusalem, 1997); *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1901–6, jewishencyclopedia.com); *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Co., 1907–14); *Wikipedia* (wikipedia.org, 2001–); *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Mary Kawena Pukui & Samuel Elbert (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1986); *Te Aka: Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*, John Moorfield (maoridictionary.co.nz); *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Herbert Williams (nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WillDict.html); and *The A to Z of Jainism*, Kristi Wiley (Vision, New Delhi, 2006).

Thanks are also due to Dr John Smith, now retired from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University, for his Unicode character fonts.

The proposed twenty-three volumes of this work, of which sixteen have now been published, constitute a non-profit, educational, and scholarly project. The elucidation of terms and the numerous citations receive significant commentary, often bringing fresh insights regarding their meaning and relationship to other terms, with inter-faith comparison highlighted by the arrangement of entries under common subject headings. By these means we seek to contribute to spiritual understanding for global human benefit and the promotion of spiritual, religious, and cultural open-mindedness. We recognize that, in all probability, the authors of the original source texts wrote their works for the benefit of humanity, not for personal profit or acclaim. We have endeavoured to walk in their footsteps.

ABBREVIATIONS

General

Abbreviations that are a common part of written language are not included in this list.

C4th	fourth century (<i>e.g.</i>)
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confero</i> , compare (L. I compare)
<i>col.</i>	column
<i>fol.</i>	folio
<i>ff.</i>	and the following (pages, lines, <i>etc.</i>)
<i>lit.</i>	literally
n.	foot- or endnote(s)
<i>passim</i>	here and there throughout (L)
p.	page
pp.	pages
pron.	pronounced
ret.	retrieved web page, followed by the month and year of retrieval
►1 ►2 ►4	Indicates a yet-to-be-published entry in Parts I, II, or IV

Dates

<i>b.</i>	born
<i>c.</i>	circa, about
<i>d.</i>	died
<i>fl.</i>	flourished
<i>r.</i>	reigned or ruled
AH	<i>Anno Hegirae</i> , Muslim lunar calendar, from 622 CE, the Hegira (<i>al-Hijrah</i>), the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era, equivalent to BC.
CE	Common Era, equivalent to AD.
SH	Solar Hijri, the official solar calendar of Iran and Afghanistan, starting on the vernal equinox.

Languages

A	Arabic	C	Chinese	Gk	Greek
AC	Avá-Chiripá	Es	Spanish	H	Hindi
Am	Aramaic	Fr	French	He	Hebrew
Av	Avestan	G	Guaraní	Hw	Hawaian

J Japanese	P Persian	S Sanskrit
L Latin	Pa Pali	Su Sumerian
M Marathi	Pk Prakrit	T Tibetan
Md Mandaean	Pu Punjabi	U Urdu
Mo Māori	Pv Pahlavi	

Sources Cited

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī*, *Granthāvalī*, *Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

<i>Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār</i>	<i>Shabd Sār</i>
<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i>	<i>Bānī</i>
<i>Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd</i>	<i>Chune hue Shabd</i>
<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i>	<i>Granthāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak</i>	<i>Bījak</i>
<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i>	<i>Sākhī Sangrah</i>
<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i>	<i>Amīghūnt</i>
<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i>	<i>Kullīyāt</i>
<i>Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>	<i>Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>
<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i>	<i>Sindhu</i>
<i>Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī</i>	<i>Padāvalī</i>
<i>Ravidās Darshan</i>	<i>Darshan</i>
<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i>	<i>Vāṇī</i>
<i>Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā</i>	<i>Gāthā</i>
<i>Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī</i>	<i>Bārahmāsī</i>
<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>

Other books and texts cited are abbreviated as below. Full details are in the bibliography:

AAA	<i>The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles</i> , 2 vols., tr. W.R. Wright.
ABSC	<i>Atma-Bodha of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya</i> , Swami Chinmayananda.
AGC	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Pritam Singh Chahil.
AGG	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Dr Gopal Singh.
AGK	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Khalsa Consensus Translation</i> , tr. Dr Sant Singh Khalsa.
ALTS	<i>Amṛtacandrasūri's Laghutattvasphoṭa</i> , Amṛtacandra, tr. P.S. Jaini.
AMBF	<i>Aḥādīs-i Maśnavī</i> , B. Furūzānfar.
AMCB	<i>Ancient Mystery Cults</i> , W. Burkert.
AMPK	"An Ancient Maori Poem," Tuhoto-Ariki, tr. G.H. Davies &

	J.H. Pope.
AMSS	<i>The Ancient Mysteries</i> , ed. Marvin Meyer.
ANB1–3	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i> , 3 parts, tr. N. Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi.
ANT	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , tr. M.R. James.
ANTE	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , ed. J.K. Elliott.
AOT	<i>The Apocryphal Old Testament</i> , ed. H.E.D. Sparks.
ASAM	<i>A Manual of Abhidhamma</i> , tr. Nārada Mahā Thera.
ASSN	<i>Aṣṭāvakra Saṃhitā</i> , tr. Swami Nityaswarupananda.
ATS1–2	<i>Asrār al-Tawḥīd fī Maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abī Saʿīd</i> , 2 vols., M. ibn Munavvar, ed. & intro. Muḥammad Raẓā Shafāʿī Kadkanī.
ATTM	<i>Plenus Aruch</i> , 8 vols., Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome, ed. A. Kohut.
AYA	<i>The Holy Qurʾān</i> , tr. ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī.
BDC	<i>The Book of Divine Consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno</i> , tr. M. Steegman.
BDTN	<i>Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings</i> , ed. John Reynolds.
BDV1–6	<i>The Book of the Discipline</i> , 6 vols., tr. I.B. Horner.
BES	<i>Black Elk Speaks</i> , John Neihardt.
BGT	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , tr. Swāmī Tapasyānanda.
BJGC	<i>The Book of Jubilees or Little Genesis</i> , tr. R.H. Charles.
BLB	<i>The Book of the Lover and the Beloved</i> , Ramón Lull, tr. E.A. Peers.
BMK	<i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> , ed. Barry Windeatt.
BPSG	<i>The Book of the Poor in Spirit</i> , A Friend of God, tr. C.F. Kelley.
BSCC	“Buddhism and Suicide: The Case of Channa,” Damien Keown.
BSS	<i>The Bústán</i> , Shaikh Musliḥ-d-Dīn Saʿdī Shīrāzī, tr. H. W. Clarke.
BSSF	<i>The Book of the Seeker</i> , Shem Tob ben Joseph ibn Falaquera, tr. M. Herschel Levine.
BTAD	<i>Basic Themes</i> , Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, tr. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.
BTB	<i>The Book of the Twelve Beguines</i> , Jan Van Ruysbroeck, tr. J. Francis.
BTNT	<i>The Buddha and His Teachings</i> , Venerable Nārada Mahāthera.
BWFP	<i>Buddhism of Wisdom & Faith</i> , Thích Thi n Tâm, tr. Sutra Translation Committee of the US and Canada.
BWIC	<i>Ibn ʿAtaʾ Illah: The Book of Wisdom</i> , tr. V. Danner, and <i>Kwaja Abdullah Ansari: Intimate Conversations</i> , tr. W. Thackston.
CA	<i>Confessions: Saint Augustine</i> , tr. R.S. Pine-Coffin.
CAFS	<i>Confessions of St Augustine</i> , tr. F.J. Sheed.
CAG	“Coptic Apocryphal Gospels,” tr. F. Robinson.
CBD	<i>The Conference of the Birds</i> , Farid ud-Din Attar, tr. Afkham Darbandi & Dick Davis.
CCED	<i>Cosmos and Community</i> , Livia Kohn.
CDBB	<i>The Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i> , 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.

CDP	<i>The Collected Dialogues of Plato</i> , ed. E. Hamilton & H. Cairns.
CDSV	<i>The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English</i> , Geza Vermes.
CEI	<i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , Cyril Glassé.
CFD	<i>Crying for A Dream</i> , Richard Erdoes.
CGDO	<i>A Chanting Guide</i> , Dhammayut Order in the USA.
CGM	<i>The Call of the Great Master</i> , Daryai Lal Kapur.
CGT	<i>Càigēntán</i> , Hóng Zìchéng (Yīngmíng).
CH	<i>The Clementine Homilies</i> , tr. Thomas Smith <i>et al.</i>
CHLD	<i>The Craft of the Heart</i> , Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, tr. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.
CIMK	<i>Calm and Insight</i> , Bhikku Khantipalo.
COLA	“Counting the Omer,” O.C. Levene & Rabbi Y. Hartman.
COT	<i>The Compass of Truth</i> , Muhammad Dara Shikoh, tr. S.R. Vasu.
CPM	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean</i> , tr. E.S. Drower.
CPMS	<i>Cultivating Perfection</i> , Louis Komjathy.
CPS	<i>Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis (Sharh-e Shathîyât)</i> , Ruzbehan Baqli Shirazi, ed. Henry Corbin.
CSA	<i>The Confessions of Saint Augustine</i> , tr. E.B. Pusey, ed. T. Smith.
CSK	<i>The Cell of Self-Knowledge</i> , ed. Edmund Gardner.
CSTM	<i>Cultivating Stillness</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
CTMP	<i>The Book of Chuang Tzu</i> , tr. Martin Palmer.
CTTP	<i>Cultivating the Tao</i> , tr. Fabrizio Pregadio.
CU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. William Johnston.
CUCW	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Clifton Wolters.
CVAB	<i>The Call of the Vedas</i> , A.C. Bose.
CW	<i>Angelus Silesius: The Cherubic Wanderer</i> , tr. Maria Shradý.
CWJC1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
CWSH	<i>The Collected Works of Shinran</i> , 2 vols., tr. Dennis Hirota <i>et al.</i>
CWSV1–9	<i>Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 9 vols.
CWT1–3	<i>The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila</i> , 3 vols., tr. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez.
CWTA1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
DAA	<i>The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle</i> , tr. G. Phillips.
DASN	<i>Dīvān-i ‘Aṭṭār</i> , incl. <i>Qaṣā’id</i> , <i>Tarjīāt</i> , va <i>Ghazaliyāt</i> , ed. S. Nafīsī.
DCMU	<i>Dadu: The Compassionate Mystic</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DDB1–2	<i>Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī</i> , 2 vols.
DFQM	<i>Dīwān ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī.
DG1–2	<i>Dariyā Granthāvalī</i> , 2 vols., D.B. Shāstrī.
DGS1–2	<i>Selections from Sri Dasam Granth Sahib</i> , 2 vols., tr. P.S. Sandhu.
DHA	<i>Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī</i> , ed. Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.

- DHI *Dīvān-i Hātif-i Isfahānī*, ed. Waḥīd Dastgirdī.
- DHJL *Dīwān des Abū'l-Ḥasan Jehuda ha-Levi*, 4 vols., ed. Ḥ. Brody.
- DHK *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn.
- DHWC *The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ*, 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
- DIH *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
- DISM *The Dharma that Illuminates All Beings*, Kalu Rinpoche.
- DKK *Dīvān-i Kamāl al-Dīn Mas'ūd-i Khujandī*, ed. 'Azīz Dawlatābādī.
- DKUC *Discourses on Kaivalyopanīśad*, tr. Swami Chinmayananda.
- DMK *Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyah*, Muẓaffar 'Alī Shāh Kirmānī, ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
- DNAM *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, S.D. Gill & I.F. Sullivan.
- DNB *Dīvān-i Niyāz Barelvī*, Anwār al-Ḥasan.
- DNTB *Dīgha Nikaya*, tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
- DP1–4 *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4 vols., tr. B. Jowett.
- DPN *The Dhammapada*, Narada Thera.
- DPR *The Dhammapada*, tr. S Radhakrishnan.
- DRA *Discourses of Rūmī*, tr. A.J. Arberry.
- DS1–19 *Dàoshū shí'èr zhōng*, 19 titles, Liú Yīmíng.
- DSC *Dariyā Sāhib (Bihārvāle) ke chune hue Shabd*.
- DSGG *The Dialogues of St Gregory the Great*, tr. H.J. Coleridge.
- DSM *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
- DSMR *Dīvān-i Kāmil-i Shams-i Maghribī*, Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī.
- DSSK *Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar*, K.N. Upadhyaya.
- DSTR *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*, Rūmī.
- DTK *The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction*, Louis Komjathy.
- DTL *Die to Live*, Maharaj Charan Singh.
- DZ1–1487 *Dào zàng*, refers to the Zhèngtǒng dào zàng, 1487 titles in 60 vols.
- EBEP *Eknāthānchi Bhajane*, Eknāth.
- ECMK *Early Chinese Mysticism*, Livia Kohn.
- ECMS *On the Essence of Chassidus*, M. Schneerson, tr. R. Y.H. Greenberg & S.S. Handelman.
- EGPW *Nāgārjuna on the Six Perfections*, Ārya Nāgārjuna, tr. Bhikshu Dharmamitra.
- EIM *Early Islamic Mysticism*, Michael Sells.
- EPHK *The Eightfold Path for the Householder*, Jack Kornfield.
- ESRR *Èrbǎi wúshí suì rén ruìshí jì*, Yáng Sēn.
- ETBH *Everyday Tao*, Deng Ming-Dao.
- ETSM *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, Robert Beer.
- ETTT *Esoteric Teachings of the Tibetan Tantra*, tr. C.C. Chi.
- EVT1–2 *The Elders' Verses: Theragāthā*, 2 vols., K.R. Norman.
- FHAC *Food for the Heart*, Ajahn Chah.
- FLI *Farhang-i Lughāt va-Isfīlāḥāt va-Ta'bīrāt-i 'Irfānī*, J. Sajjādī.

FLML	<i>The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Richard Misyn, ed. Frances Comper.
FLRR	<i>The Fire of Love</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Clifton Wolters.
FMIA1–9	<i>Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah</i> , 9 vols., Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn.
FNI1–15	<i>Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf</i> , 15 vols., J. Nūrbakhsh.
FOSC	<i>The Flower Ornament Scripture</i> , tr. Thomas Cleary.
FYL	<i>Fāngdào yǔlù</i> , ed. Lǐ Lèqíu.
GGG	<i>From Glory to Glory</i> , tr. H. Musurillo.
GIP	<i>The Graces of Interior Prayer</i> , A. Poulain, tr. L.L.Y. Smith.
GLTS	<i>The Golden Letters</i> , tr. John Reynolds.
GMS	<i>Al-Ghazālī the Mystic</i> , Margaret Smith.
GR1–2	<i>Ghaṭ Rāmāyan</i> , 2 vols., Tulsī Sāhib; Belvedere.
GS	<i>The Gnostic Scriptures</i> , Bentley Layton.
GSB	<i>Gulāl Sāhib kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere.
GSBM	<i>Ginzā der Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer</i> , M. Lidzbarski.
GST	<i>Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms</i> , ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, tr. Nabil Safwat (English).
GSTA	<i>Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms</i> , ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, tr. Nabil Safwat (Arabic).
GSV	<i>Gheranda Samhita</i> , tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
GVM	<i>The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God</i> , G. Widengren.
HA	<i>Maṣnavī Haft Awrang</i> , ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. M.M. Gīlānī.
HAAl	<i>Al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyah</i> , Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh, comm. Ibn ‘Abbād al-Nafazī al-Turandī.
HAG	<i>Hermetica</i> , tr. Walter Scott.
HCML	<i>Shekel ha-Kodesh</i> , Moses de Leon.
HCW	<i>Hadewijch: The Complete Works</i> , tr. Columba Hart.
HDP1–9	<i>Handbooks for Daoist Practice</i> , 10 vols., tr. Louis Komjathy.
HDP3	<i>Yellow Thearch’s Basic Questions</i> , tr. Louis Komjathy.
HDP8	<i>Redoubled Yang’s Fifteen Discourses</i> , tr. Louis Komjathy.
HDPE	<i>Hawaiian Dictionary</i> , Mary Kawena Pukui & Samuel Elbert.
HGCH	<i>Hermetica</i> , tr. Brian Copenhaver.
HHTD	<i>The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , B. Cuevas.
HLLJ	<i>Holy Living: Saints and Saintliness in Judaism</i> , Louis Jacobs.
HLT	<i>The History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler of Strasbourg</i> , tr. Susanna Winkworth.
HMCi	<i>History, Manners, and Customs of The Indian Nations</i> , John Heckewelder.
HOcB	<i>Hoofprint of the Ox</i> , Master Sheng-yen with Dan Stevenson.
HPsD	<i>Hathapradipika of Svatmarama</i> , tr. Swami Digambarji & Pt. Radhunathashastri Kokaje.

HS	<i>The Hymn of the Soul</i> , tr. A.A. Bevan.
HSB	<i>Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari</i> , tr. Muhsin Khan.
HSDM	<i>The Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary</i> , Nancy Mayorga.
HSM	<i>Hadith Sahih Muslim</i> , tr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqui.
HYP	<i>Hatha Yoga Pradipika</i> , tr. Pancham Sinh.
HYPM	<i>Hatha Yoga Pradipika</i> , Swami Muktibodhananda & Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
IBEH	<i>An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics</i> , Peter Harvey.
ICCB	<i>Imitation of Christ</i> , Thomas à Kempis, tr. A. Croft & H. Bolton.
ICTK	<i>The Imitation of Christ</i> , Thomas à Kempis, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
IDC	<i>Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i> , Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī.
IINP	<i>Isaac Israeli</i> , tr. Alexander Altmann & Samuel Stern.
IKJ	<i>Al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma'rīfat al-Awākhir wa al-Awā'il</i> , Shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, ed. 'Āṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī.
IUDG1–5	<i>Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i> , 5 vols., Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, ed. 'Allāmah Zīn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-'Irāqī.
JB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> .
JCL	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures</i> ; in <i>The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library</i> .
JEDS	<i>Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary</i> , Daito Shuppansha.
JE	<i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> .
JH1–108	<i>Dào zàng jīnghuá</i> , 108 titles.
JJPS	<i>Jap Ji: A Perspective</i> , T.R. Shangari.
JSB1–2	<i>Jagjīvan Sāhib kī Bānī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere.
JY1–315	<i>Dào zàng jíyāo</i> , 315 titles in 10 vols., ed. Chén Dàlì et al.
KA1–10	<i>Kashf al-Asrār va-'Uddat al-Abrār</i> , 10 vols., Abū al-Faḍl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.
KADG	<i>Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn</i> , Abī Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.
KB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> , English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch.
KCFS	<i>Kamma and Causality</i> , Francis Story.
KCN	<i>Kahuna Class Notes</i> , David 'Daddy' Bray.
KFF	<i>Kitāb Fīhi mā Fīhi</i> , Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KG	<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i> , ed. Shyām Sundardās.
KGSD	<i>The Kiss of God</i> , Michael Fishbane.
KHI	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī 'Irāqī</i> , ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī.
KI	<i>The Koran Interpreted</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
KIF	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn</i> , Muḥammad 'Alī ibn 'Alī al-Tahānawī, ed. Mawlavī Muḥammad Wajīh et al.
KIFT1–4	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn</i> , 4 vols., Muḥammad 'Alī ibn 'Alī al-Tahānawī, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Basaj.
KJV	<i>The Bible: Authorized King James Version</i> .

KLTA	<i>Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf</i> , Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Arabic).
KM	<i>Kashf al-Mahjūb</i> , al-Hujwīrī, tr. R.A. Nicholson.
KMM	<i>Kashf al-Mahjūb</i> , Hujwīrī, ed. V.A. Zhukovsky.
KNJI	<i>Khuddaka Nikaya</i> , tr. John Ireland.
KNTB	<i>Khuddaka Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
KPA	<i>The Koran: With a Parallel Arabic Text</i> , tr. N.J. Dawood.
KRN1–2	<i>Kitvei Ramban</i> , 2 vols., Moses ben Naḥman, ed. Ḥayyim Chavel.
KSD1–10	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i Kabīr</i> , 10 vols., ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KSS	<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i> ; Belvedere.
KSS1–4	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 4 vols.; Belvedere.
KSSS	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa'dī</i> , Shaykh Muṣliḥ Dīn Sa'dī Shīrāzī.
KTJ	<i>Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt</i> , al-Jurjānī, ed. 'Adil Anwar Khidr.
KWGN	<i>Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name</i> , V.K. Sethi.
LAL	<i>Life After Life</i> , Raymond Moody.
LBDF	<i>As Light Before Dawn</i> , Eitan Fishbane.
LBFD	<i>Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma</i> , tr. L. Hurvitz.
LGFS	<i>The Love of God</i> , St Francis de Sales, tr. Vincent Kerns.
LGSM	<i>Treatise on the Love of God</i> , St Francis de Sales, tr. H.B. Mackey.
LOSM	<i>Light on Sant Mat</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
LPD	<i>A Letter of Private Direction and Other Treatises</i> , tr. J. Griffiths.
LPH	<i>The Ladder of Perfection</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
LSBN	<i>Lankāvatāra Sūtra</i> , ed. Bunyū Nanjō.
LSFY	<i>The Lives of Saints</i> , 2 vols., Pedro de Ribadeneira, tr. W. Petre.
LSJ	<i>Light on Saint John</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
LSMH	“Lower (Second?) Section of the Manichaeon Hymns,” tr. T. Chi.
LSMT	<i>The Lankavatara Sutra: A Mahayana Text</i> , tr. D.T. Suzuki.
LSOC	<i>The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras</i> , tr. B. Watson.
LSS	<i>The Life of the Servant</i> , Henry Suso, tr. James M. Clark.
LTTG	<i>Lieh-tzu: A Taoist Guide to Practical Living</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
LTTT	<i>Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching</i> , ed. L. Kohn & M. LaFargue.
LXX	<i>The Septuagint</i> , C3rd–2nd BCE (Greek).
MAA	“The Mythological Acts of the Apostles,” A.S. Lewis.
MAAG	<i>Mīzān al-'Amal</i> , al-Ghazālī.
MALK	“Mirror of Auras: Chen Tuan on Physiognomy,” Livia Kohn.
MARB	<i>Mashrab al-Arwāḥ</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī.
MBS	<i>Mīrābāī kī Shabdāvalī</i> ; Belvedere.
MDBB	<i>Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
MDI	<i>Mystical Dimensions of Islam</i> , Annemarie Schimmel.
MDLS	<i>Mira: The Divine Lover</i> , V.K. Sethi.
MEAA	<i>The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia</i> , Moshe Idel.

MEM	“Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism,” G. Widengren.
MGK	<i>The Meaning of the Glorious Koran</i> , Marmaduke Pickthall.
MHCP	<i>The Manichaean Hymn-Cycles in Parthian</i> , tr. M. Boyce.
MHK	<i>Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah</i> , ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qāshānī, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā’ī.
MHVA	<i>Mahāvastu-Avadāna</i> , based on <i>Le Mahāvastu</i> , 3 vols., ed. É. Senart.
MIMM	<i>Mirṣād al-‘Ibād min al-Mabda’ ilā al-Ma’ād</i> , Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāyah, ed. Muḥammad Riyāḥī.
MJR1–8	<i>The Mathnawī of Jalālu’d-dīn Rūmī</i> , 8 vols., tr. R.A. Nicholson.
MKAK	<i>Meditation and the Kabbalah</i> , Aryeh Kaplan.
MMA	<i>Monk of Mount Athos</i> , Archimandrite Sophrony, tr. R. Edmonds.
MMS	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: English and Punjabi Translation</i> , 8 vols., tr. Manmohan Singh.
MNTB	<i>Majjhima Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
MP	<i>Muhammads People – A Tale by Anthology</i> , Eric Schroeder.
MP1–2	<i>Mystical Poems of Rumi</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
MPB	<i>A Manichaean Psalm-Book</i> , Part II, tr. C.R.C. Allberry.
MRJA	“Maori Religion,” Johannes Andersen.
MRM1–2	<i>Maori Religion and Mythology</i> , 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
MSA	<i>Manāzil al-Sā’rīn</i> , ed. S.L. Beaurecueil, tr. A.G.R. Farhādī.
MSEA	<i>Milei di-Shemaya</i> , Ele’azar Azikri, ed. Mordechai Pachter.
MSLB	<i>The Maori School of Learning</i> , Elsdon Best.
MSPC	<i>My Submission</i> , Maharaj Sawan Singh.
MSS	<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i> .
MTAN	<i>Manṭiq al-Ṭayr</i> , Shaykh ‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. M.R.S. Kadkanī.
MTGS	<i>Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism</i> , Gershom Scholem.
MTIN	<i>Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh</i> , tr. A.J. Wensinck.
MTMC	<i>Mishneh Torah</i> , Moses Maimonides, tr. Eliyahu Touger.
MTMM	<i>Mishneh Torah</i> , Moses Maimonides.
MUM	<i>Minor Upanishads</i> , tr. Swami Madhavananda.
MVJ1–3	<i>The Mahāvastu</i> , 3 vols., tr. J.J. Jones.
MZBS	<i>Manual of Zen Buddhism</i> , D.T. Suzuki.
NARG	<i>Native American Religions</i> , Sam D. Gill.
NDBB	<i>The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
NEL	<i>Nourishing the Essence of Life</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
NHS11	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XI, ed. Douglas Parrott.
NHS15	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XV, ed. Birger Pearson.
NHS20	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XX, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS21	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXI, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS22	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXII, ed. Harold Attridge.
NKK1–2	<i>Nānā i ke Kumu</i> , 2 vols., M.K. Pukui, E.W. Haertig & C. Lee.
NR1–2	<i>The Nestorians and Their Rituals</i> , 2 vols., G.P. Badger.

NRMP	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i> ; Moriah Press.
NSJ	<i>New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a Lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus</i> , tr. Bernard Grenfell & Arthur Hunt.
NUJ	<i>Nafaḥāt al-Uns</i> , ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. Maḥdī Tawhīdīpūr.
OCM	<i>The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys</i> , A. Louth.
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , Damien Keown.
OEMV	<i>Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse</i> , ed. D.H.S. Nicholson & A.H.E. Lee.
OEPR	<i>Obras espirituales póstumas del V.P. Luis de la Puente de la Compañía de Jesús</i> , ed. Elías Rejero.
OHHA	<i>Or ha-Ḥayyim</i> , Ḥayyim ibn Attar.
OHIA	<i>Oṣar Ḥayyim</i> , Isaac ben Samuel of Akko.
OKGS	<i>Origins of the Kabbalah</i> , Gershom Scholem, tr. Allan Arkush.
OMWH	<i>Ordinary Mind as the Way</i> , Mario Poceski.
OOTV1–6	<i>Divi Thomae a Villanova, ... Opera omnia</i> , 6 vols., St Thomas of Villanova.
OPJ	<i>On the Prayer of Jesus</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Father Lazarus Moore (2006 edn.).
OSD	<i>The Odes of Solomon</i> , John Davidson.
OSS	<i>Origen</i> , tr. R.P. Lawson.
PA1–7	<i>Plotinus</i> , 7 vols., tr. A.H. Armstrong.
PAC1–2	<i>The Philosophers</i> , 2 parts, T.A. Richman.
PBD	<i>Buddhist Dictionary</i> , Ven. Nyanatiloka.
PCT1–5	<i>The Philokalia</i> , 4 vols., tr. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard & K. Ware.
PCW1–10	<i>Philo</i> , 10 vols., tr. F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker.
PDB	<i>The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , R. Buswell & D. Lopez.
PDPM	<i>The Path of Discrimination</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.
PEBS	<i>Psalms of the Early Buddhists</i> , vol. 1, Mrs Rhys Davids.
PEC	<i>Plotinus (The Enneads)</i> , tr. Stephen MacKenna.
PFVM	<i>The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga) of Arahant Upatissa</i> , tr. N.R.M. Ehara Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera.
PG1–161	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Graeca</i> , 161 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne.
PISM	<i>The Progress of Insight</i> , Maḥāsi Sayādaw, tr. Nyānaponika Thera.
PNC	<i>A Pair of Naṣoraeae Commentaries</i> , tr. E.S. Drower.
POM	<i>The Path of the Masters</i> , Julian Johnson.
PPGL	<i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> , Joseph de Beaufort.
PPH	<i>Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision</i> , P. Hadot, tr. M. Chase.
PPI1–2	<i>The Philosophy of Plotinus</i> , 2 vols., tr. W.R. Inge.
PPL	<i>Plato: Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII</i> , tr. Walter Hamilton.
PPVM	<i>The Path of Purification</i> , Buddhaghosa, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.
PS	<i>Pistis Sophia</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot.

PSB1–3	<i>Paltū Sāhib kī Bānī</i> , 3 vols.; Belvedere.
PSGG	<i>Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
PSMA	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā</i> , Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipitaka.
PSPM	<i>The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch</i> , tr. John R. McRae.
PSSP	<i>The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch</i> , tr. P.B. Yampolsky.
PTCC	<i>Plato: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles</i> , tr. R.G. Bury.
PTSA1–6	<i>The Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. R. Morris & E. Hardy.
PTSAA1–5	<i>Manorathapūraṇī Anguttaranikāyāṭṭhakathā</i> , 5 vols., ed. M. Walleser & H. Kopp.
PTSD1–3	<i>The Dīgha-nikāya</i> , 3 vols., ed. T.W. Rhys Davids & J.E. Carpenter.
PTSDA1–5	<i>The Commentary on the Dhammapada (Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā)</i> , 5 vols., ed. H.C. Norman & H. Smith.
PTSI	<i>Itivuttaka</i> , ed. E. Windisch.
PTSK1–2	<i>Kathāvatthu</i> , 2 vols., ed. Arnold C. Taylor.
PTSM1–4	<i>The Majjhima-nikāya</i> , 4 vols., ed. V. Trenckner & R. Chalmers.
PTSP1–2	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> , 2 vols., ed. A.C. Taylor.
PTSQ	<i>Milindapañha</i> , ed. V. Trenckner.
PTSS1–6	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. L. Feer.
PTSSA1–3	<i>Sāratthapakāsinī Saṃyuttanikāyāṭṭhakathā</i> , 3 vols., ed. F.L. Woodward.
PTST	<i>Theragāthā and Therīgāthā</i> , ed. H. Oldenberg & R. Pischel.
PTSV	<i>The Visuddhi-Magga of Buddhaghosa</i> , ed. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.
PTSV1–5	<i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i> , 5 vols., ed. H. Oldenberg.
PU	<i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i> , tr. S. Radhakrishnan.
QAGP	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i> , Philo Judaeus, tr. R. Marcus.
QFL	<i>Quest for Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
RCML	<i>Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa</i> , Tulasīdāsa.
RDL	<i>Revelations of Divine Love</i> , Julian of Norwich, tr. C. Wolters.
RHND	<i>Risālah-ʾi Haqq Numā</i> , Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh, ed. M.R. Jalālī.
RIS	<i>Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad</i> , tr. Faḡl Maḥmūd Asīrī (English).
RISP	<i>Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad</i> , tr. Faḡl Maḥmūd Asīrī (Persian).
RJA	<i>Rasāʾil-i Jāmiʾ</i> , Khwājah ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. Waḥīd Dastgirdī.
RKJB	<i>Raidās Jī kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere.
RLRI	<i>Risālah-ʾi Lamʾāt va Risālah-ʾi Iṣṭilāḥāt</i> , ʾIrāqī, ed. J. Nūrbakhsh.
RNV1–4	<i>Rasāʾil Shāh Nīʾmatullāhī Valī</i> , 4 vols., ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RQQQ	<i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah</i> , al-Qushayrī, ed. M. al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
RRS	<i>The Revival of Religious Sciences</i> , al-Ghazālī, tr. Bankey Behari.
RSTS	<i>Ratna Sāgar</i> , Tulsī Sāhib; Belvedere.
RSV	<i>The Holy Bible: The Revised Standard Version</i> .
RTLP	<i>The Record of Tung-shan, Liang-chieh</i> , tr. William F. Powell.
SBAK	<i>The Bahir: Illumination</i> , tr. Aryeh Kaplan.
SBB	<i>Sahajobāī kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere.

SBCP	<i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i> , tr. Wing-tsit Chan.
SBHB	<i>Sant Bānī</i> , Hem Chandra Bhargava.
SBJT	<i>The Schocken Book of Jewish Mystical Testimonies</i> , Louis Jacobs.
SBNN	<i>Sūn Bū'ēr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù</i> , Chén Yīngníng.
SBP	<i>Sār Bachan Chhand-Band (Sār Bachan Poetry)</i> , Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh.
SBPS	<i>Sar Bachan Poetry (Selections)</i> , Soami Shiv Dayal Singh.
SCJS	<i>Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn jījìào</i> , Wú Shòujū.
SCM1–2	“Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
SCML	<i>The Secrets of Chinese Meditation</i> , Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk).
SD1–2	<i>Spiritual Discourses</i> , 2 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
SDLF	<i>Sifre on Deuteronomy</i> , tr. Louis Finkelstein.
SDSL	<i>Sky Dancer</i> , K. Dowman.
SDT1–4	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i> , 4 vols., tr. Gudo Wafu Nishijima & Chodo Cross.
SEKI	<i>Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah</i> , Moshe Idel.
SER	<i>The Spiritual Espousals</i> , Jan van Ruysbroek, tr. Eric Colledge.
SFSJ	<i>Structure and Functions of Soul in Jainism</i> , S.C. Jain.
SG	<i>Spiritual Gems</i> , Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji.
SGFO	<i>Secret of the Golden Flower</i> , tr. Stuart A. Olsen.
SGRV	<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vānī</i> , ed. B.P. Sharmā.
SHEA	<i>Sefer Haredim</i> , Rabbi Eleazar Azikri.
SHME	<i>Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius</i> , tr. A.J. Mason.
SICE	<i>The Soul of the Indian</i> , Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa).
SIM	<i>Studies in Islamic Mysticism</i> , R.A. Nicholson.
SKHV	<i>Sha'arei Kedushah</i> , Ḥayyim Vital; British Museum Ms. 749.
SKHZ	<i>Sha'arei Kedushah</i> , Ḥayyim Vital; dailyzohar.com.
SKS	<i>Self-Knowledge (Atmabodha)</i> , tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
SL	<i>Spiritual Letters</i> , Baba Jaimal Singh Ji.
SLAI	<i>The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian</i> , Joseph Epes Brown.
SMA	<i>Ṣad Maydān</i> , Khwājah 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. Qāsim Anṣārī.
SMIK1–13	<i>The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan</i> , 13 vols.
SMMB	<i>Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Māori</i> , Elsdon Best.
SMSQ	<i>Sharḥ-i Manāzil al-Sā'rīn</i> , 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī.
SMWE	<i>The Shaman and the Medicine Wheel</i> , Evelyn Eaton.
SNTB	<i>Samyutta Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
SOSJ	<i>The Science of the Soul</i> , Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Jagat Singh.
SP	<i>The Sacred Pipe</i> , recorded & ed. Joseph Epes Brown.
SP1–3	<i>Spiritual Perspectives</i> , 3 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
SPDS	<i>The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra</i> , tr. Buddhist Text Translation Society.
SPID	<i>Spiritual Progress or Instructions in the Divine Life of the Soul</i> , François Fénelon, Madame Guyon & Père Lacombe, ed. J. Metcalf.

SPIK	<i>Seven Stages of Purification & Insight Knowledges</i> , Matara Sri Nāṇārāma.
SPJH	<i>Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi</i> , ed. H. Brody, tr. N. Salaman.
SPK	<i>The Sufi Path of Knowledge</i> , William Chittick.
SPL	<i>The Sufi Path of Love</i> , William Chittick.
SPM	<i>The Sacrament of the Present Moment</i> , J.-P. de Caussade, tr. K. Muggeridge.
SPS1–4	<i>Śiva Purāṇa</i> , 4 vols., tr. J.L. Shastri.
SPTT	<i>Sahshatkar Pathavar Tukaram</i> , G.V. Tulpule.
SRK1–5	<i>Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita</i> , 5 vols., Mahendra Nath Gupta.
SRSA	<i>Suicide as A Response to Suffering</i> , Michael Attwood.
SSE1–15	<i>Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology</i> , 15 vols., Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. T. Graham <i>et al.</i>
SSI1–10	<i>Sacred Songs of India</i> , 10 vols., V.K. Subramanian.
SSJR	<i>The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, The Sparkling Stone, The Book of Supreme Truth</i> , John of Ruysbroeck, tr. C.A. Wynschenk.
SSJV	<i>Samaṇ Suttam</i> , comp. Jinendra Varṇī, tr. T.K. Tukol & K.K. Dixit.
SSK	<i>Sīrat-i Shaykh-i Kabīr Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khafīf Shīrāzī</i> , Abū al-Ḥasan Daylamī, tr. Rukn al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Junayd Shīrāzī.
SSM1–3	<i>Studies of the Spanish Mystics</i> , 3 vols., E. Allison Peers.
SSSL	<i>Shūraṃgamasamādhisūtra</i> , tr. É. Lamotte & S. Boin-Webb.
SSSN	<i>Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice</i> , Carol Newsom.
SSTK	<i>Seven Steps to the Tao</i> , Livia Kohn.
SSV	<i>The Siva Samhita</i> , tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
STYG	<i>Sha’arei Teshuvah</i> , Yonah ben Avraham of Gerona, tr. S. Silverstein.
SUKW	<i>The Śākta Upaniṣad-s</i> , tr. A.G. Krishna Warriar.
SVSL	<i>‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , tr. Th. Emil Homerin.
SVUW	<i>The Saṃanya Vedānta Upaniṣad-s</i> , tr. A.G. Krishna Warriar.
SWNY	<i>Selected Writings of Nichiren</i> , ed. Philip B. Yampolsky.
SWT	<i>A Study of Wisdom</i> , tr. Clifton Wolters.
SYAK	<i>Sefer Yetzirah</i> , tr. Aryeh Kaplan.
SYYP	<i>The Science of Yoga</i> , I.K. Taimni.
SZGS	<i>Sha’arei Zedek</i> , ed. Gershom Scholem.
T1–100	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> , 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaigokyu.
TACD	<i>The Teachings of Ajahn Chah</i> , Ajahn Chah.
TAT	<i>Ṭaṣawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Ṭaṣawwuf</i> , Y.E. Bertels, tr. Sirius Izadi.
TBDG	<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , Padmasambhava & Tertön Karma Lingpa, tr. Gyurme Dorje.
TBDR	<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , Padma Sambhava, discovered by Karma Lingpa, tr. Robert A.F. Thurman.

TBDT	<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , Guru Rinpoche, according to Karma Lingpa, tr. F. Fremantle & Chögyam Trungpa.
TBDW	<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , tr. Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, ed. W.Y. Evans-Wentz.
TBLD	<i>The Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Maurice Walshe.
TBTL	<i>Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism</i> , tr. Chang Chung-Yuan.
TCDO	"Traditional Native Concepts of Death," Ojibwa.
TDK	<i>A Testament of Devotion</i> , Thomas Kelly.
TEAK	<i>The Taoist Experience: An Anthology</i> , Livia Kohn.
TGH1–3	<i>Thrice-Greatest Hermes</i> , 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
TGLE	<i>Tao, The Great Luminant</i> , tr. Evan Morgan.
TIVU	<i>The Taoist Inner View of the Universe and the Immortal Realm</i> , Ni Hua-Ching.
TLDS	<i>The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying</i> , Sogyal Rinpoche.
TMED	<i>Taoist Meditation</i> , tr. Thomas Cleary.
TMLT	<i>Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques</i> , ed. Livia Kohn.
TMPS	<i>Taoist Mystical Philosophy</i> , Livia Kohn.
TMU	<i>Thirty Minor Upaniṣads</i> , tr. K. Narayanasvami Aiyar.
TOS	<i>Tayyibat</i> , tr. Lucas White King.
TPBW	<i>Therīgatha</i> , tr. Charles Hallisey.
TPCS	<i>The Path</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
TPEQ	<i>The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters</i> , Stephen Eskildsen.
TRW	<i>Tending the Roots of Wisdom</i> , comp. Hong Yingming, tr. Paul White & Frank Jiang.
TS	<i>The Teachings of Silvanus</i> , J. Zandee.
TSH1–2	<i>Tuṣī Sāhib Hāthrasvālē kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere.
TSSH	<i>Tuṣi Sahib: Saint of Hathras</i> , J.R. Puri & V.K. Sethi.
TSSW	<i>Through a Speculum That Shines</i> , Elliot R. Wolfson.
TT1–2	<i>The Texts of Taoism</i> , 2 vols., tr. James Legge.
TTCE	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , Lao Tsu, tr. Gia-fu Feng & Jane English.
TTCS	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , tr. Jonathan Star.
TTCW	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , Lao Tzu, tr. John C.H. Wu.
TTQ	<i>The Thousand and Twelve Questions</i> , E.S. Drower.
TTW	<i>Teachings of the Tao</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
TTWP	<i>A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom</i> , Whithall N. Perry.
TVR	<i>Tukārām Vāchanāmṛit</i> , R.D. Ranade.
TVW1–5	<i>The Treatise on the Great Virtue of Wisdom of Nāgārjuna</i> , 5 vols., tr. Étienne Lamotte & Gelongma Karma Migme Chödrön.
TVWC	<i>Two Visions of the Way</i> , Alan K.L. Chan.
TYAI	<i>Taoist Yoga</i> , tr. Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk).
TYPY	<i>The Textbook of Yoga Psychology</i> , Rammurti Mishra.
UGAG	<i>The Unvarnished Gospels</i> , tr. Andy Gaus.

UMMB	<i>Unravelling the Mysteries of Mind & Body</i> , Sayalay Susīlā.
VCSM	<i>Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya</i> , tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda.
VE	<i>The Vedic Experience</i> , Raimundo Panikkar.
VSJ	<i>Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda Yogindra</i> , tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
VYAA	<i>Ve-zot le-Yehudah</i> , Abraham Abulafia.
WCA1-2	<i>The Writings of Clement of Alexandria</i> , 2 vols., tr. W. Wilson.
WCI	<i>The Wisdom of China and India</i> , ed. Lin Yutang.
WGMJ	<i>With a Great Master in India</i> , Julian Johnson.
WHWD	<i>What Happens When We Die</i> , Sam Parnia.
WLT	<i>The Wisdom of Lao-tse</i> , tr. Lin Yutang.
WPJ1-4	<i>The Works of Philo Judaeus</i> , 4 vols., tr. C.D. Yonge.
WS1-7	<i>Woodbrooke Studies</i> , 7 vols., tr. A. Mingana.
WTAO	<i>What is Tao?</i> , Alan Watts.
WTB	<i>Die Welt des Tao</i> , ed. Gellért Béky.
WTM1-3	<i>With the Three Masters</i> , 3 vols., Rai Sahib Munshi Ram.
WZ1-3	<i>The Wisdom of the Zohar</i> , 3 vols., arr. F. Lachower & I. Tishby.
X1-90	<i>Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō</i> , 90 vols., ed. M. Eun & N. Tatsue.
XB1-23	<i>Dàozàng xùbiān</i> , 23 titles in 4 vols., ed. Mǐn Yīdé.
YJWS	<i>Yīnshìzǐ jìngzuò wèishēng shíyàn tán</i> , Jiǎng Wéiqiáo.
YSB	<i>Yārī Sāhib kī Ratnāvalī</i> ; Belvedere.
YU	<i>The Yoga Upaniṣads</i> , tr. T.R. S'rīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār.
ZAAH	<i>Zen in the Art of Archery</i> , Eugen Herrigel, tr. R.F.C. Hull.
ZBEM	<i>Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment</i> , tr. Daniel Matt.
ZHO	<i>Xiāozāi hùnmíng</i> , tr. Stuart A. Olsen.
ZW1-991	<i>Zángwài dàoshū</i> , 991 titles in 36 vols.

8.1 STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS,
FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE
(VIKALPA-ZÌWÙ)

vikalp(a) (S/H), **vikappa** (Pa), **rnam par rtog pa** (T), **fēnbié** (C), **funbetsu** (J)
Lit. alternation, variation, differentiation, distinction, diversity; entirely (*rnam par*) in thought (*rtog pa*); distinguishing, separating (*fēnbié*); appears in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist texts.

As a term used to describe aspects of human mind function, *vikalpa* has a spread of meaning. On the one hand, it means uncertainty, indecision, vacillation, hesitation, doubt, fancy and imagination, and hence, waves of thought or waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛitti*), swinging from positive to negative, from one idea to another, and from one thing to another.

On the other hand, it refers to the faculty of the mind that distinguishes between things and sees differences. In this context, it refers to conceptualization, opinion, and discrimination (in the sense of discerning differences between things). The converse here is *nirvikalpa* (without distinction, unconditioned), as in *nirvikalpa samādhi* (unconditioned absorption, absolute absorption) and *nirvikalpa Brahman* (unconditioned *Brahman*).

Vikalpa is one of the five kinds of *chitta-vṛitti* listed by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras*.¹ These are: *pramāṇa* (source of valid knowledge); *viparyaya* (erroneous knowledge, illusion, misinterpretation); *vikalpa* (fancy, imagination, conceptualization, opinion, doubt); *nidrā* (sleep); and *smṛiti* (memory). *Vikalpa*, he says, is the mental concept of something, whether or not that something actually exists:

Conceptualization (*vikalpa*) is comprehension founded only on words,
 in the absence of the thing itself.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:9

While *pramāṇa* and *viparyaya* are based upon objective, sensory experience, *vikalpa* is understood here as purely mental. Though drawing upon past experience, the mind constructs things of an entirely imaginary nature, congruous or incongruous, as when reading a novel or story. *Vikalpa* also includes hallucinations and illusions that have little basis in objective reality. They may be caused by any combination of physiological, biochemical, and psychological conditions. Hence, *vikalpa* includes delusions of grandeur, paranoia, hypochondria, unfounded guilt and so on, as well as sensory hallucinations.²

Taking the meaning in a general sense, the *Adhyātma Upanishad* understands mental imaginings (*vikalpa*) as a primary hindrance in understanding the true nature of Reality:

By expelling (from the mind), leaving no residue, all objects that are superimposed on one's *ātmā*, one becomes the *Parabrahman* – the All, the Non-dual, and the Motionless. How can there be the diversity of the universe of *saṃkalpa* (conception) and *vikalpa* (imagination)

in that one Principle, which is immutable, formless, and the same throughout? ... *Vikalpa* has its root in the mind (*chitta*) only. When the mind is not, there is nothing.

Adhyātma Upanishad 21–22, 26; cf. *TMU* p.44

Likewise, Shankara:

Such conceptions (*kalpanā*) as ‘thou’, ‘I’ or ‘this’ take place through the defects of the reasoning faculty (*buddhi*). But when the *Paramātman*, the One without a second, manifests Itself in *samādhi*, all such imaginings (*vikalpa*) of the aspirant are dissolved through the realization of the Truth (*Tattva Vastu*).

The wise man (*sādhū*) – at peace, self-controlled, perfectly detached from the sense world, forbearing, and devoting himself to the practice of *samādhi* – always reflects on his own self as being the Self of the whole universe. Completely destroying by this means all imaginings (*vikalpa*) due to the darkness of ignorance (*avidyā*), he lives blissfully as *Brahman*, free from action (*nishkriyā*) and free from the waves (*nirvikalpa*) (of the mind)...

A man of realization, free from the idea of the body, moves amid sense enjoyments like someone subject to transmigration, through desires engendered by the *prārabdha karma*. He himself, however, lives unmoved in the body, like a witness, free from (mental) agitation (*vikalpa*), like the axis of a potter’s wheel.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 354–55, 551; cf. *VCSM* pp.134–35, 205

In Jainism, *vikalpa* similarly refers to mental imagination and agitation:

Those who leave attachment to all concepts, taking refuge in their own form (*svarūpa*), enjoy the (inner) nectar with a peaceful mind, free from the web of mental vicissitudes (*vikalpa*).

Amṛtachandra, Samayasāra 70; cf. in *SFSJ* p.212

In Buddhist epistemology, *vikalpa* is the mental faculty of dividing and differentiating things, of imagination and the formation of concepts, judgments and opinions concerning things. The transcendent Reality is understood to be one and undivided; the unenlightened mind makes everything seem separate and multiple. *Vikalpa* is the mental process by which Reality is divided into and distinguished as separate things, by which the oneness of Reality is perceived as duality, and by which the duality of existence can be understood. As such, *vikalpa* is regarded as the root cause of *saṃsāra* (the world of suffering and transmigration). As the Bodhisattva Māragocarānupālita says in the *Shūrangama-samādhi Sūtra* (‘Concentration of Heroic Progress’):

Foolish worldlings are bound by their own notions (*saṃjñā*), imaginations (*vikalpa*), perverse views (*viparyāsa*), and apprehensions (*nimittograhana*); they are bound by their movements (*iñjita*), reflections (*manyānā*), and idle talk (*prapañcha*); they are bound by what they have seen, heard, thought, and known (*dṛishṭa-shruta-mata-vijñāta*).

Shūrangama-samādhi Sūtra 88, T15 642:637c, SSSL p.175

For this reason, the wisdom of enlightenment is known as *nirvikalpa-jñāna* (non-differentiating wisdom). In the Buddhist *Yogāchāra* school, *vikalpa* is defined more specifically as the mental process that creates the illusion of perceiver (*grāhaka*) and perceived (*grāhya*), hence the term *grāhya-grāhaka-vikalpa*, which refers to the process that results in the illusion of duality. The mental differentiation that precedes verbal differentiation is also known as *manojalpa* (mental chatter), which is often used synonymously with *prapañcha* (mental proliferation) and *vichāra* (reflection, evaluation, discursive thought).

The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* distinguishes between the real and the unreal by means of a common example – the unreal is said to be a reflection of the real. Trees on land, for instance, are regarded as real, while their reflections in water are unreal. According to the dialogue related in the text, the Buddha explains to the *bodhisattva* Mahāmāti that those who are bound by the habit of dualistic, discriminative and discursive philosophical thinking see duality everywhere. But they are seeing only the reflection of things:

Mahāmāti, it is like trees reflected in water: they are reflections and yet they are not-reflections; the trees are figures, and yet they are not-figures. In the same manner, Mahāmāti, those who are conditioned by the habituated energy of philosophical views continue with their differentiation (*vikalpa*) between oneness and otherness, bothness and not-bothness, being and nonbeing; for their minds are not enlightened as regards what can be seen by Mind alone. . . .

Mahāmāti, it is like an echo that reproduces the sound of a human voice, a river, or the wind. The echo is neither existent nor nonexistent, because it is heard as a voice and yet it is not a voice. In the same way, Mahāmāti, the notions of being and nonbeing, oneness and otherness, bothness and not-bothness arise from the differentiation (*vikalpa*) of individual mind and its habituated energy.

Lankāvatāra Sūtra 2:35, LSBN pp.93–94; cf. LSMT p.82

Buddhist epistemology distinguishes three categories of *vikalpa* (*trivikalpa*), although the three are described with different shades of meaning by the various schools:

1. *Svabhāva-vikalpa*. Innate discriminative thought; the initial thought (*vitarka*) concerning an object of the senses and subsequent sustained thought (*vichāra*) concerning it.
2. *Abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa*. Conceptual discriminative thought; discursive examination concerning an idea that arises in the mind when it considers something related to the past, present, or future (the three times, *trikāla*).
3. *Anusmaraṇa-vikalpa*. Discriminative thought involving the memory of things from the past.

See also: **chitta-vṛitti**, **nirvikalpa samādhi**, **prapañcha**, **pratyaksha**, **vichāra**, **vitakka**.

1. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 1:6.
2. See R.S. Mishra, *Textbook of Yoga Psychology*, TYPY p.126; I.K. Taimni, *Science of Yoga*, SYYP pp.14–15.

vikshep(a) (S/H) *Lit.* throw (*kshepa*) about (*vi*); shaking up, dispersion, scattering, dissipation, agitation, confusion, perplexity, distortion; spiritually, the shaking of the mind, an outward turning of the attention; the outward projection of the mind.

According to *Advaita Vedānta*, the function of *māyā* (illusion) is fulfilled through the twin powers (*shakti*) of *āvaraṇa* (concealment) and *vikshepa* (projection), which work in tandem. *Āvaraṇa* veils the true nature of Reality, of *Brahman*. Just as a relatively small cloud can veil the sun, which is much larger and hotter than the earth, so too is *Brahman* – though never losing anything of Its pure nature – veiled by *āvaraṇa*. Simultaneously, by outward projection (*vikshepa*), the higher mind creates the illusory reality of lower planes of consciousness. These are the realms of the mind (*brahmāṇḍa*) that attract the *ātman* (soul), drawing it away from its divine Source.

Together, these two powers constitute *avidyā* (nescience, spiritual ignorance), and are responsible for the reduction of the *ātman* to the status of a *jīva* (embodied soul), which – having taken the company of the mind – thinks it has its own separate identity, and suffers as a consequence. *Vikshepa-shakti* is also known as *mahat* (cosmic mind, cosmic intelligence),¹ the intelligence that underpins and permeates all creation below. At this high stage of the creative process, both these two powers are permeated by bliss and joy.

The projecting power (*vikshepa-shakti*) of the higher mind is expressed at the human level as the outgoing tendency of the mind. To demonstrate the expression of *āvaraṇa* at the human level, Shankara gives the example of a man in the dark who mistakes a rope for a snake. It is never anything other

than a rope, but the mind of the man who is holding it is obscured or covered over by the thought of the imaginary snake.

In *Advaita Vedānta*, *vikshepa* is regarded as one of the four main obstacles standing in the way of *samādhi* (absorption, deep meditation):

The mind, unable to rest in *Brahman* after becoming detached from the world, may feel distracted (*vikshepa*) by ideas, for the most part petty, inconsequential, and insignificant. These have been described as the ‘little imbecilities’ of the mind. Their number is legion and they are fleeting in nature. They may be the result of the aspirant’s futile talk or meaningless actions in the past. They make him restless. Sometimes, unable to reach *Brahman*, and detached from the world, the aspirant exaggerates a particular emotion or feeling which is inconsequential in itself, and thus creates an obstruction to spiritual life.

Swami Nikhilananda, Self-Knowledge, SKS p.137

Distraction (*vikshepa*) is the dwelling of the mind
on things other than the Absolute,
because of the failure to dwell on It.

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 211; cf. VSY p.114

The three other obstacles are: *laya* (sleepiness, torpidity); *kashāya* (deep-rooted attachment, sensual enjoyment); and *rasāsvāda* (sipping nectar, perception of pleasure), which is satisfaction with a level of bliss lower than the Supreme.

The outgoing nature of *vikshepa*, either as the projection of the three worlds of the mind or as the outward tendencies of the human mind, is understood as an expression of *rajoguṇa*, the active, creative, and outgoing *guṇa* (attribute). Similarly, the torpidity of *laya* is understood as an expression of *tamoguṇa*, the *guṇa* of darkness and inertia. Hence, the observation in the *Maitrī Upanishad*:

The mind, it is said, is of two kinds, pure and impure – pure when freed from desire and impure from contact with desire. By freeing the mind from sloth (*laya*) and distraction (*vikshepa*) and making it motionless, a person becomes delivered from his mind (reaches mindlessness), then that is the supreme state (*paramapada*).

Maitrī Upanishad 6:34; cf. PU p.845

Shankara explains the matter by reference to the *guṇas* (attributes) that underlie all diversity in the mind worlds:

When his own self (*ātman*), endowed with the purest splendour, is hidden from view, a man through ignorance falsely identifies himself with this body, which is the non-self (*anātman*). Then that great power

of *rajas*, called the projecting power (*vikshepa*), sorely afflicts him through the binding fetters of lust, anger, and so on. . . .

Just as, on a cloudy day, when the sun is swallowed up by dense clouds, they are disturbed by cold and violent blasts, so when the *ātman* is hidden by intense ignorance, the dreadful projecting power (*vikshepa-shakti*) afflicts the foolish man with numerous griefs. . . .

The projecting power (*vikshepa-shakti*), with the help of the veiling power, connects a man with the siren of an egoistic idea, and distracts (*vikshepayati*) him through its associated *guṇa* (of *rajas*). . . .

It is extremely difficult to conquer the projecting power (*vikshepa-shakti*) unless the veiling power (*āvaraṇa-shakti*) is completely rooted out. And that covering over the *ātman* naturally vanishes when the subject (the *ātman*) is completely distinguished from the sense objects, like milk from water. But the victory is undoubtedly (complete and) free from obstacles when there is no oscillation (*vikshepa*) of the mind due to the unreal objects of the senses.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 140, 143, 343–44; cf. VCSM pp.52–54, 130–31

The *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali enumerate nine causes of *vikshepa* that constitute hindrances or obstacles to concentration in meditation:

Disease, indolence, doubt, heedlessness,
 lethargy, worldliness, erroneous perception,
 lack of concentration, instability –
 These are causes of mental distraction (*chitta-vikshepa*),
 and they are obstacles.
 The natural companions of these distractions (*vikshepa*) are:
 mental discomfort, anxiety, restlessness of the body,
 irregular inspiration and expiration.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:30–31

In simple terms relating to everyday human experience, it is the shaking of the mind that prevents it from seeing the light within or hearing the divine Sound. As Maharaj Sawan Singh puts it:

The Sound Current never stops; it is going on within us without any interruption. . . . We could not live if it were to stop even for a second. It is the life current in us. The Sound is permanently there, but we do not hear it when our attention is scattered. Our mind is always shaking. When the water of a lake is agitated, we do not see the reflection of our face in it, and if the water is muddy, the mud is an additional disturbing factor. When the water is still and the mud settles down to the bottom, the face becomes visible in the clear water.

Similarly, when the waves of *mal* (impurity and dirt), *vikshep* (shaking of mind) and *āvaraṇ* (veil of illusion), that constantly disturb our mind, disappear, and the mirror of the heart becomes clear and pure, it begins to reflect the inner beauties. This cleansing process is accomplished by *simran* and *bhajan*.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, in Call of the Great Master, CGM pp.196–97

See also: **āvaraṇa** (6.2), **chitta-vṛitti**, **kashāya** (►4), **rasāsvāda**.

1. See e.g. *Paingala Upanishad* 1.

vilās(a) (S/H/Pu), **bilās** (H/Pu) *Lit.* shining forth, appearance, manifestation; play, sport, merriment, pastime, pleasure, delight, enjoyment; mystically, the state of the soul in the inner realms, where it ‘dances’ in joy and bliss:

My attachment to the holy feet of the *guru* has become intense,
and I am filled with great joy (*bilās*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 4:1.4, SBP p.37

vimoksha (S), **vimokkha** (Pa), **rnam par thar pa** (T), **jiētuō** (C), **gedatsu** (J)
Lit. liberation, deliverance, release, emancipation; deliverance from the realms of *saṃsāra* (transmigration); freedom from various aspects of the world (its impermanence *etc.*) and from attachment to it; used synonymously with *vimukti* (Pa. *vimutti*); in Buddhism, generally appearing as the three or eight liberations.

The eight liberations (Pa. *aṭṭha-vimokkha*) outlined in the Pali *suttas*¹ are eight stages of increasingly deep meditation that represent progressive degrees of liberation from *saṃsāra* (transmigration), as the meditator passes through and transcends the four lower and four higher *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption), finally reaching cessation of knowing and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*) – the cessation of all sensory and cognitive activity, gross and subtle – which in this context implies *nibbāna*.

Progression through the *aṭṭha-vimokkha* is outlined in the *Mahānidāna* and several other *suttas*.² The eight stages, especially the first three, are cryptically portrayed, but taking the help of similar descriptions in the Pali *suttas* of ascent through the *jhānas*, it can be inferred that the first three refer to passage through the increasingly subtle realms of *rūpaloka* (world of forms, patterns, or archetypes). The next four stages are a standard description of passage through the four *arūpāyatana* (formless realms) of *arūpaloka* (formless world), stages that became identified in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the Pali *suttas*) as the four higher *jhānas*. The *Mahāyāna* Buddhist

philosopher Nāgārjuna (c.C2nd–3rd) summarizing the *Abhidhamma* texts, also analyses the eight *vimokkhas* in a similar manner.³ *Rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* would seem to correspond to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology.

The three *vimokkhas* are listed in the *Saṅgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* as three out of six *samādhis*, but no more is said of them.⁴ The same liberations and several others are considered at length in the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where they are called *ceto-vimuttis* (liberations of mind).⁵ They are also covered in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* ('Path of Analytic Knowledge') of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ('Path of Purification') as the three doors or triple gateway (*vimokkha-mukha* or *vimokkha-dvāra*) to liberation, which, when taken as the focus of meditation (*anupassanā*), lead to *nibbāna*. These three *vimokkhas* identify the transcendent nature of *nibbāna*, and their opposites characterize *saṃsāra*:

1. *Animitta-vimokkha*. *Lit.* without (*a*) conditions (*nimitta*) liberation; signless liberation. *Nibbāna* is free from the signs (*nimitta*) and marks (*lakkaṇa*) that characterize *saṃsāra*, such as the multiplicity of conditioned or relative things (S. *saṃskāra*, Pa. *sankhāra*) and their transience. Progress towards this state can be attained by meditation on impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), which serves to detach the mind from all transient things and focus it on *nibbāna*, where the senses no longer function, all is still, and oneness prevails.
2. *Appaṇihita-vimokkha*. *Lit.* without (*a*) desire (*paṇihita*) liberation; desireless liberation. In *nibbāna*, there are no desires, for there is no individuality, no separation, and nothing to desire. *Saṃsāra* is characterized by desire for seemingly individual and separate things. The state of desirelessness can be inculcated through meditation on suffering (*dukkhānupassanā*), which leads to the understanding that desire for and attachment to transient things only leads to unhappiness.
3. *Suññatā-vimokkha*. *Lit.* emptiness (*suññatā*) liberation. *Nibbāna* is empty of self, since it has no source and is complete in itself. In *saṃsāra*, all things are separated from each other and everything has an illusory and transient identity. Meditation on *suññatā* (*suññatānupassanā*) leads to the awareness that all phenomenal or compounded things are empty or devoid of an enduring or definitive separateness or identity (*atta*). Nothing has an independent existence; everything is relative to and depends upon something else in a chain of dependent origination. Meditation on emptiness automatically turns the attention away from the world and focuses it on *nibbāna*, which is one and uncompounded.

According to a summary in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*:

Three gateways to liberation (*vimokkha-mukha*) lead to escape from the world, namely: that the mind (*citta*) meditates on all conditioned things (*sankhāras*) as limited, and hastens onwards (in consciousness) to that which is unconditioned (*animitta-dhātu*); that the mind is disturbed by all the conditioned things of existence, and hastens onwards to that which is desireless (*appaṇihita-dhātu*); that the mind sees all conditioned things as something alien to itself, and hastens onwards to that which is void (*suññatā-dhātu*).

Paṭisambhidāmagga 5:54, PTSP2 p.48

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* provides a brief indication of the actual meditation practice intended:

A *bhikkhu*, having gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty place, meditates: “This place is devoid of self or of what belongs to self.” In this way, he conceives no desire for it; hence it is liberation by desirelessness (*appaṇihita-vimokkha*). This is desireless liberation (*appaṇihita-vimokkha*).

Paṭisambhidāmagga 5:5, PTSP2 p.36

The two other liberations are approached in the same manner, through meditation on the absence of an enduring self. It is presumed that various forms of *anupassanā* (reflection, meditation) on topics related to the three *vimokkhas* are being advocated as approaches to *nibbāna*. The texts of different Buddhist schools have accordingly explained and analysed the three gateways in various ways.⁶

The Pali *suttas* themselves speak of various other kinds of *vimokkha*. Often, *vimokkha* implies the elimination of grasping and attachment (*upādāna*). In the *Kalāra Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, for example, the Venerable Sāriputta is asked what kind of *vimokkha* he would understand as, “Rebirth has ended; the holy life has been lived; and what had to be done has been done.” He replies, “Through liberation from self (*ajjhataṃ-vimokkha*), through the destruction of all grasping (*upādāna*), I dwell mindfully in such a way that the impurities (*āsava*) do not flow within me and I no longer believe in an individual self.”⁷ The *Āneñjasappāya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* adds, “This is the deathless (*amata*) liberation (*vimokkha*) of the mind (*citta*) through the absence of grasping (*anupādā*).”⁸

The *Nirāmisā Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* associates *sāmisā-vimokkha* (carnal liberation) with liberation from the realm of form (*rūpa*), *nirāmisā-vimokkha* (spiritual liberation) with liberation from the formless realm (*arūpa*), and *nirāmisā-nirāmisā-vimokkha* (ultra-spiritual liberation) with liberation from

passion (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The latter is regarded as the highest liberation, *i.e.* *nibbāna*, which is commonly depicted as the cessation of these three primary human imperfections. The three forms of liberation chart the progression of the soul through the *rūpaloka*, *arūpaloka*, and beyond.⁹

The three doors are also mentioned in *Mahāyāna* texts, where a fourth door is sometimes added, that of the inherent luminosity (*prakṛiti-prabhāsvara*) of the mind.

See also: **ashṭa-vimoksha, moksha.**

1. *E.g.* *Anguttara Nikāya* 8:66 (*Vimokkha Sutta*), *PTSA4* p.306; *Dīgha Nikāya* 15 (*Mahānidāna Sutta*), 16 (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), 33 (*Sangīti Sutta*), *PTSD2* pp.70–71, 111–12, *PTSD3* pp.261–62; *Majjhima Nikāya* 77 (*Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta*), *PTSM2* pp.12–13.
2. *E.g.* *Anguttara Nikāya* 8:66 (*Vimokkha Sutta*), *PTSA4* p.306; *Dīgha Nikāya* 16 (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), 33 (*Sangīti Sutta*), *PTSD2* pp.111–12, *PTSD3* pp.261–62; *Majjhima Nikāya* 77 (*Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta*), *PTSM2* pp.12–13.
3. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra* 34, *T25* 1509:215a–16a, *TVW3* pp.1057–64.
4. *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.219.
5. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.296–98.
6. See *e.g.* “vimokṣamukha,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, *PDB*.
7. *Samyutta Nikāya* 12:32, *Kālāra Sutta*, *PTSS2* pp.53–54; *cf.* *CDBB* p.570.
8. *Majjhima Nikāya* 106, *Āneñjasappāya Sutta*, *PTSM2* p.265.
9. *Samyutta Nikāya* 36:31, *Nirāmisā Sutta*, *PTSA4* p.237.

vimutti (Pa) *Lit.* liberation, release, deliverance, freedom, emancipation; from the Sanskrit *vimukti*; liberation from bondage to *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, which is the domain of suffering; hence, freedom from suffering; also, partial liberation, especially as *ceto-vimutti* (liberation of the mind) and *paññā-vimutti* (liberation through wisdom or gnosis); often used synonymously with *vimokkha*; a term appearing in the Pali *suttas* and associated commentaries, where the precise meaning of the derivative terms is often uncertain and has consequently been variously analysed and interpreted by Buddhist scholars, ancient and modern.

According to the *Paññāvimutta Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, a monk is liberated through wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*) when he reaches the first *jhāna* (stage of meditative absorption), but this is not the perfect and complete liberation. That final stage is only attained when the meditator has passed through each of the four *rūpa-jhānas* of *rūpaloka* (realm of forms, patterns, or archetypes) and the four further stages of *arūpaloka* (formless realm). *Rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* would seem to correspond to the astral and higher

realms of Western terminology. On attaining the first *jhāna*, a meditator is liberated (at least temporarily) from sensuality and unwholesome qualities; as he progresses through the four *jhānas*, he is liberated from other aspects of the mind (the five *jhānangas*); in the four higher stages, he is increasingly liberated from the more subtle processes of consciousness that prevail in *arūpaloka*.¹

The *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* maintains that “those *bhikkhus* who are *arahantas* (noble ones, enlightened ones) with impurities destroyed (*khīṇāsava*), who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, and destroyed the fetters of being”, have no further spiritual work to do, for they are “completely liberated (*vimutta*), with perfect gnosis”. One who has not experienced these eight stages, but whose “impurities have been destroyed by his seeing with wisdom”, is known as one “liberated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*)”, and he too has no further spiritual work to do. The point being made is that it is inner purity that leads to liberation, just as it is attachment and impurity that draws the individual into this world; and in this process of spiritual evolution, not everyone will experience the same intermediate stages on the inner journey. Everyone’s experience will be different, and it is possible to reach the journey’s end without experiencing the intervening stages. The *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* also says that one who is “liberated-both-ways (*ubhato-bhāga-vimutta*)”, who has experienced the four *jhānas* and the four higher stages, has also reached the highest liberation. “Liberated-both-ways” implies attainment of wisdom or gnosis and experience of the eight stages of meditative absorption.

The *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* goes on to describe other categories of disciple, some of whom have experienced the eight absorptions and some who have not, but all of whom are still afflicted with a degree of impurity. Therefore, it is said, they still have spiritual work to do and have not attained complete liberation.²

Various Pali commentarial texts expand further on the subject, with some variations between the opinions expressed.³ Among these, the *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* says that the *ubhato-bhāga-vimutta* is ‘liberated-both-ways’ because he is liberated from the body through meditation on the formless, while liberation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*) is attained by following the path of the noble disciple (*ariya-puggala*).⁴

Liberation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*) is the second of the two main characteristics of liberation mentioned by the Pali texts. In its highest sense, *ceto-vimutti* refers to attaining the full enlightenment of an *arahanta*. It is the term used by the Buddha when he speaks of realization of complete and perfect enlightenment:

The knowledge and vision arose in me: “Unshakable (*akuppa*) is my liberation of mind (*ceto-vimutti*); this is my last birth; now there is no more renewed existence.”

Saṃyutta Nikāya 48:28, Buddha Sutta, PTS55 p.206, CDBB p.1678

In many places, the compound term *ceto-vimutti paññā-vimutti* is used as a single term for the supreme state of liberation.⁵ The two terms are really one term, and refer to the same reality:

A monk through the extinction of the impurities (*āsava*) reaches in this very life the pure liberation of mind (*ceto-vimutti*), the liberation through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*), which he has realized for himself by his own direct knowledge (*abhiññā*).

Dīgha Nikāya 5, Kūṭadanta Sutta, PTS D1 p.156, TBLD pp.145–46

Ceto-vimutti is also described as either permanent or temporary (*sāmayika*); that is, a meditator can reach a certain level of spiritual progress, but then fall back, as in the story of the monk Godhika who, having fallen back six times from “temporary liberation of mind (*sāmayika ceto-vimutti*)”, becomes so frustrated that he kills himself in the hope of attaining *nibbāna*.⁶

Ceto-vimutti is the final accomplishment of the noble disciple, who passes through the four successive stages of stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and enlightened one (*arahanta*, noble one). Each stage represents the conquest or shedding, to an increasing degree, of all fetters (*saṃyojanas*), impurities (*āsavas*), and defilements (*kilesas*). A mind that has relinquished all such imperfections is deemed to be liberated. But like *paññā-vimutti*, *ceto-vimutti* is also used to describe the stages on the way to perfect liberation. Several stages of *ceto-vimutti* are described:

1. *Appamāṇa ceto-vimutti*. Immeasurable liberation of mind. According to the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, *appamāṇa ceto-vimutti* refers to the attainment of the four *brahmavihāras*, the four sublime states or immeasurables (*appamaññās*). These consist of meditation on: lovingkindness (*mettā*); compassion (*karuṇā*) for and empathy with the sufferings of others; altruistic or empathetic joy, happiness for others, genuine happiness over the virtue, welfare and success of others (*muditā*); and equanimity, neutrality, or evenness of mind (*upekkhā*).⁷
2. *Animitta ceto-vimutti*. Liberation of the mind from the relative conditions or signs (*nimitta*) of existence; liberation of the mind from the multiplicity and variety of ever-changing phenomena; equivalent to *animitta-vimokkha*. The *Mahāvedalla Sutta*⁸ says that this liberation is attained by withdrawing the attention from all conditioned things and dwelling in unconditioned concentration of mind (*animitta ceto-samādhi*).⁹
3. *Suññatā ceto-vimutti*. Liberation of mind through emptiness (*suññatā*) of greed, hatred, and ignorance; also through meditation on the truth that

nothing has a definitive and independent self, that everything is relative to something else.¹⁰ This is also called *suññatā-vimokkha*.

4. *Ākiñcañña ceto-vimutti*. Liberation of mind by no-thingness (*ākiñcañña*). The *Mahāvedalla Sutta* says that this refers to attaining the third of the four higher stages of meditative absorption, known as *ākiñcaññāyatana* (realm of no-thingness).¹¹
5. *Akappa ceto-vimutti*. Unshakeable, imperturbable, or steadfast liberation of mind; liberation that once attained does not waver; also, the partial liberation that arises from mastering any of the four lower *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). According to the Pali *suttas*, the “goal of this holy life” is not “gain, honour, and praise”, but “unshakeable liberation of mind (*akappa ceto-vimutti*)”.¹² In fact, “gain, honour, and praise are an obstacle” to the attainment of “unshakeable liberation of mind (*akappa ceto-vimutti*)”.¹³ The *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* says that “*akappa ceto-vimutti* is devoid of the impurities (*āsava*) of lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).” And since these three impurities are responsible for obscuring what is immeasurable, unconditioned, and essentially no-thing, *akappa ceto-vimutti* is regarded as the highest of the *ceto-vimuttis*, and all the other liberations are alternative names for the same state.¹⁴

See also: **arūpāyatana** (8.5), **dharmānusārin** (7.1), **vimoksha**.

1. *Anguttara Nikāya* 9:44, *Paññāvimutta Sutta*, *PTSA4* pp.452–53.
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 70, *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.477–78; cf. *MDBB* pp.580–81, *MNTB*.
3. *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, on *Majjhima Nikāya Tīkā*, and *Puggala Paññatti*, on *Majjhima Nikāya* 70, *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*, in *MDBB* pp.16–17, 1274–75 (n.702–7).
4. *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, on *Majjhima Nikāya* 70, *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*, in *MDBB* p.1274 (n.702).
5. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 6 (*Ākankheyya Sutta*), 12 (*Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*), *PTSD1* pp.35, 71, *passim*; *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 16:9 (*Jhānābhīñṇā Sutta*), 35:132 (*Lohicca Sutta*), *PTSS2* p.214, *PTSS4* pp.119–20, *passim*; *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:141 (*Ārambhati Sutta*), *PTSA3* pp.165–67, *passim*.
6. *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 4:23, *Godhika Sutta*, *PTSS1* pp.120–22.
7. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* pp.247–50; *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.297; *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 46:54, *Mettā Sutta*, *PTSS5* pp.118–21.
8. See also *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 41:7, *Godatta Sutta*, *PTSS4* pp.295–97.
9. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.298.
10. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.297–98.

11. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.297.
12. *Majjhima Nikāya* 30, *Cūlasāropama Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.204–5; cf. *MDBB* p.297.
13. *Samyutta Nikāya* 17:30, *Khīṇāsavabhikkhu Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.239, *CDBB* p.691.
14. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43, *Mahāvedalla Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.298.

viññāṇañcāyatana (Pa) *Lit.* realm (*āyatana*) of boundless (*ananta*) consciousness (*viññāṇa*); second of the four immaterial or formless realms or divisions (*arūpāyatana*) of the formless or immaterial world (*arūpaloka*), according to Buddhist cosmology. The *arūpāyatanas* are also known as the *arūpa-jhānas* (formless or immaterial meditative absorptions), thus emphasizing the point that the transcendental realms can also be understood as stages in meditation. See **arūpāyatana** (8.5).

vipallāsa (Pa), **viparyāsa** (S) *Lit.* perversion, inversion, misapprehension, derangement, corruption; in Buddhism, the distortion of perception (*saññā*), mind (*citta*) and view (*diṭṭhi*) that leads to a wrong view (Pa. *micchā-diṭṭhi*, S. *mithyā-dṛiṣṭi*) or understanding of the nature of life, resulting in continued bondage to the realms of birth and death.

According to the *Vipallāsa Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, there are four fundamental misapprehensions:¹

1. Perceiving the impure or unattractive (Pa. *asubha*, S. *ashubha*) to be pure or attractive (Pa. *subha*, S. *shubha*).
2. Perceiving the non-self (Pa. *anattā*, S. *anātman*) to be self (Pa. *atta*, S. *ātman*).
3. Perceiving suffering (Pa. *dukkha*, S. *duḥkha*) to be happiness or pleasure (Pa. *sukha*, S. *sukha*).
4. Perceiving the impermanent (Pa. *anicca*, S. *anitya*) to be permanent (Pa. *nicca*, S. *nitya*).

The *Vipallāsa Sutta* continues with the verse:

Perceiving permanence (*nicca*) in the impermanent (*anicca*),
 perceiving pleasure (*sukha*) in what is suffering (*dukkha*),
 perceiving a self (*atta*) in what is non-self (*anattā*),
 and perceiving attractiveness (*subha*) in what is unattractive (*asubha*),

beings resort to wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*),
their minds deranged, their perception twisted.

Such people are bound by the yoke of *Māra* (Death, the Evil One),
and do not reach security from bondage.
Beings continue in *saṃsāra* (transmigration),
going to birth and death.

But when the *buddhas* come into the world,
they send forth a brilliant light,
revealing this *Dhamma* that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Having heard it, wise people have regained their sanity.
They see the impermanent (*anicca*) as impermanent (*anicca*)
and what is suffering (*dukkha*) as suffering (*dukkha*).
They see what is non-self (*anattā*) as non-self (*anattā*)
and the unattractive (*asubha*) as unattractive (*asubha*).

By acquiring right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*),
they overcome all suffering (*dukkha*).

Anguttara Nikāya 4:49, Vipallāsa Sutta, PTSa2 p.52; cf. NDBB p.438

According to Buddhist legend, the four perversions are represented symbolically by the ‘four witherings (C. *sikū*, J. *shiko*)’. It is said that at the time of the Buddha’s death and entry in *parinirvāṇa*, four pairs of *shāla* trees surrounded the pallet on which his body lay, one pair at each of the four cardinal directions. Of each pair, one blossomed, while the other withered and died. The ‘four witherings’ or withered trees are said to represent the four perversions.

See also: **anattā** (6.2), **anitya** (6.2), **duḥkha** (6.2), **mithyā-dṛishṭi**, **samyag-dṛishṭi**.

1. *Anguttara Nikāya 4:49, Vipallāsa Sutta, PTSa2 p.52.*

viparyaya (S) *Lit.* misapprehension, misconception, error, mistake, misinterpretation; erroneous knowledge, mistaken perception, illusion; often translated in Jain philosophy as perversity; one of the five kinds of *chitta-vṛitti* (waves of the mind, mental fluctuations) listed by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras*.¹ These five are: *pramāṇa* (source of valid knowledge); *viparyaya* (erroneous knowledge, illusion, misinterpretation); *vikalpa* (fancy, imagination, opinion, doubt); *nidrā* (sleep); and *smṛiti* (memory). Of *viparyaya*, he says:

Viparyaya is false knowledge (*mithyā-jñāna*),
unrelated to the actual nature possessed (by the thing perceived).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:8

Viparyaya is distinct from *vikalpa* in that the former is based upon faulty perception of objective, sensory experience, while the latter is understood by Patañjali as pure mental fantasy or concept. Thus, using Shankara's well-known example, if a person clutches hold of a rope in the dark and mistakes it for a snake, he is a victim of *viparyaya* rather than *vikalpa*. He has mistaken the identity of something that actually exists, rather than falling prey to an entirely fictitious creation of his own mind.

In a spiritual context, *viparyaya* is essentially nescience or spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*), of which Patañjali gives four examples:

Ignorance (*avidyā*) is taking the non-eternal as the eternal,
the impure as the pure, the painful as the pleasurable,
and not-self as Self.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:5; cf. TYPY p.174

The *Sāṃkhya* school of Indian philosophy lists five *viparyayas*, known to yogic philosophy as the five *kleshas* (afflictions, impurities, imperfections). They are: *avidyā* (spiritual ignorance); *asmitā* (mistaken sense of identity, egotism); *rāga* (likes, love and attachment to material things); *dvesha* (dislikes, hatred, aversion to pain); and *abhinivesha* (love of material existence and fear of death, attachment to material existence).

According to Jain philosophy, *viparyaya* is one of the three hindrances to the acquisition of right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*). Right knowledge refers both to an external understanding of the principles of the Jain way of life, and more significantly to the realization of the true nature of the soul. The three hindrances to right knowledge are regarded as: doubt (*saṃshaya*); perversity (*viparyaya*); and indefiniteness or vagueness (*anadhyavasāya*).

See also: **chitta-vṛitti**, **vikalpa**.

1. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 1:6.

vipassanā (Pa), **vipashyanā** (S) *Lit.* insight; in Buddhism, seeing things as they really are, penetrating insight into the way things are; often twinned with *samatha* (tranquillity), both of which are depicted as part of the fruits of meditation arising on the path to enlightenment (*bodhi*), and as essential for the elimination of various human imperfections and the attainment of *nibbāna*. See **vipassanā** (8.5).

vipassanā-ñāṇa (Pa) *Lit.* insight (*vipassanā*) knowledge (*ñāṇa*); preliminary forms of understanding that cultivate an awareness of the distinction between mind and body, the relationship between the two, the impermanence of physical and mental phenomena, and so on, leading to *gotrabhū-ñāṇa* (the fourteenth stage) as the conscious affirmation of the desire to follow the spiritual path to its culmination, and finally to enter the supramundane or transcendental path (*lokuttara-magga*) that leads to *nibbāna*.¹

In a Buddhist context, ‘insight’ is the common translation of *vipassanā*. It implies penetrating insight into the way things really are. It is clear, intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena (*sankhāras*, ‘formations’, ‘fabrications’, ‘conditioned things’), as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are, in and of themselves. Depending on the context, the term covers both mystical insight or gnosis, as well as a deep intellectual understanding. In *Theravāda* Buddhism, *vipassanā* implies a perception of things with a deep understanding of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of existence – impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) – that characterize all aspects of material and mental phenomena.

The traditional method of developing *vipassanā* is by contemplation or reflection (*anupassanā*) on the “eighteen principal insights (*vipassanā*)” that are listed, for example, in Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*.² These begin with contemplation of the three characteristics, and culminate in turning away from the cycle of birth and death.

There are many ways in which meditative experience and progress can be classified, and there are several classification schemes, ancient and modern. Frequently mentioned in present times in the context of what is called *vipassanā* meditation are the sixteen *vipassanā-ñāṇas* (insight-knowledges) that evolved in the early *Theravāda* tradition. Although absent from the Pali *suttas*, in his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa lists and discusses all but the first three,³ although the concepts underlying even these three are also mentioned here and there in the *Visuddhimagga*.

As an ordered list, ten of these appear in some of the *Abhidhamma* manuals.⁴ But their arrangement as a definitive sequence of sixteen stages of progress in meditation seems to be an innovation of later times, probably originating with the eighteenth-century Burmese Forest Tradition, which spread to Thailand and other places in the Far East, and became popular in the West during the twentieth century.

The first three *vipassanā-ñāṇas* are initial and fundamental realizations regarding mental and material experience. They constitute the preparation for and beginning of the meditative process:

1. *Nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*. Knowledge of the distinction (*pariccheda*) between mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*), between mental and material phenomena; awareness of the difference between an object and one’s

mental perception of it. For instance, actual movement of a hand is *rūpa*; awareness of the movement of the hand is *nāma*. Likewise, seeing something, its colour and the eyes themselves are all *rūpa*; awareness of the seeing is *ñāṇa*. Through realization that all normal human experiences consist of mind and matter, the meditator becomes aware that there is no ‘I’, no permanent personal identity. In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa observes that learning to understand the distinction between mind and matter is a stage in the development of insight (*vipassanā*). It is, he says, an essential aspect of the first of his five purifications (*visuddhi*) – the purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*), of the way one perceives the world.⁵

2. *Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*. Knowledge of the causal (*paccaya*) connections (*pariggaha*) between mental and material states. Awareness that in the absence of the mind, there is no material experience; that without material objects there can be no awareness of them; that one thought leads on to another, by association; and that one material event leads on to the next. Buddhaghosa writes that grasping the causal nature of the interrelationships between mind and matter (*nāmarūpa-paccaya-pariggaha*) is the next step in the development of insight: “Just as when a skilled physician encounters a disease he seeks its origin; or just as when a compassionate man sees a tender little child lying on its back in the road he wonders who its parents are.” He analyses the close causal relationships between *kamma* (S. *karma*), mind and body, and the three aspects of time – past, present, and future – describing the insight developed by reflecting upon this as the “purification of the transcending of doubt (*kankhā-vitarāṇa-visuddhi*)” – as “knowledge established by transcending doubt concerning the three divisions of time”.⁶ The “doubt” he speaks of is the natural human confusion concerning the reasons behind the way things happen in the way they do. Awareness of the causal connections between material and mental states is equivalent to seeing the chain of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) – that everything is interconnected.
3. *Sammasana-ñāṇa*. Knowledge by investigation and comprehension (*sammasana*). The close examination and analysis of materio-mental processes (*nāmarūpa*) – especially those comprising the five aggregates (*khandhas*) – revealing in them the three characteristics, *viz.* impermanence (*anicca*), the cause of suffering (*dukkha*), and no permanent self or identity (*anattā*). By first distinguishing between the mental and the physical, and then observing the interrelationships between all things, the meditator now comes to perceive the essentially illusory nature of all aspects of mind and matter. The correct perception of these three intrinsic facets of existence is fundamental to Buddhist philosophy, and

is mentioned throughout Buddhist literature, appearing in a wide range of contexts. They are the first three in the commonly quoted list of eighteen *vipassanās* and associated reflections or meditations (*anupassanās*) thereon. Buddhaghosa speaks of developing this insight as a part of the “purification by knowledge and vision of what the path is and what it is not (*maggāmagga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)”.⁷

He also calls this the stage of tender insight (*taruṇa-vipassanā*). At this point, he says, “when he is a beginner, . . . ten imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakilesas*) may manifest in him.” These include perceptions of inner light of various kinds, experiences of bliss, and so on.⁸ They are designated imperfections because, although they are indications of progress, they may be mistaken for *nibbāna* itself, rather than stepping stones on the way.

Buddhaghosa lists the next nine *ñāṇas*, from *udayabbaya-ñāṇa* to *anuloma-ñāṇa*, as part of the “purification of knowledge and insight of the Way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)”, which is the sixth of the seven purifications he prescribes for the aspiring meditator.⁹ The first eight relate to cultivating awareness of the nature of phenomena in the mundane (*lokiya*) world. The ninth and last (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) is a preparation for entering the supramundane or transcendental path (*lokuttara-magga*) of the *ariya-puggala* (noble disciple), which equates to entry into the *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption) or *rūpaloka* (world of form, patterns, or archetypes). Buddhaghosa introduces these forms of knowledge, with the observation:

Insight (*vipassanā*) reaches its culmination with the eight knowledges (*ñāṇa*), and knowledge conforming to the truth (*saccānulomika-ñāṇa*) is ninth; these constitute what is called purification by knowledge and vision of the Way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:1, PTSV p.639; cf. PPVM p.666

These nine *ñāṇas* – each awareness, understanding or knowledge progressing naturally to the next – constitute the fourth to thirteenth *vipassanā-ñāṇas*:

4. *Udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge stemming from the contemplation (*anupassanā*) of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*); awareness that everything comes into being, subsists for a while, and then ceases to exist. Buddhaghosa points out that the three characteristics of mind and matter may be overlooked because they are obscured by seeming continuity. But by giving close attention to the fact that these three are subject to continual change, their true nature is revealed. When something appears to be unchanging, its essential impermanence may be overlooked; when suffering goes on and on, its acceptance becomes habitual; something may

appear to have a definitive identity only because it has not been analysed into its individual parts. The real nature of things is revealed by contemplation of the way they come into being and then cease to exist.¹⁰

5. *Bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from the contemplation of the decay or dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of all things in existence, implying all physical and mental phenomena; awareness that nothing is eternal, that things are passing away even as they come into existence. Having meditated on the arising and passing away of phenomena, the practitioner turns his attention specifically to their dissolution and decay. Buddhaghosa lists eight blessings that arise at this stage of meditation practice: the meditator abandons belief in eternal existence (*bhava-dīṭṭhi*); becomes detached from life; develops right effort, *i.e.* gives regular attention to meditation; engages in right livelihood, *i.e.* avoids means of earning a living that are not in accordance with Buddhist ethics; enjoys freedom from anxiety; enjoys freedom from fear; becomes patient and gentle; and overcomes discontent and a desire for sensual pleasures.¹¹
6. *Bhayatupaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from the awareness (*upaṭṭhāna*) of fearfulness (*bhaya*); recognition of the fact that since everything is evanescent, nothing has any substance or reality, that nothing in the mental or physical spheres really exists – it is only the ever-shifting patterns of sensory experience; developed by meditative observation that all material and mental phenomena have either passed away, are passing away, or will pass away. Nothing lasts. One who sees all things as impermanent, as a source of suffering or as lacking in any identity perceives existence as something fearful, like a mirage or an empty village. A number of Indian mystics have also described the world of transmigration as a terrible, fearful, or dreadful ocean (*e.g. bhāi sāgar, bhav sāgar*).¹²

This awareness can give rise to an existential insecurity or fear. In an intense form, it can show itself as panic; in a weaker form, it can manifest as feelings of unease, that something is wrong, or of helplessness and absence of control. As the meditator begins to realize that even his individuality or self does not really exist (*anattā*), he starts to understand that ‘he’ is not really doing anything. On the other hand, the realization that nothing is what it seems and little or nothing is in one’s own hands, can lead to a relaxed frame of mind.

7. *Ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from the contemplation of misery, danger, or tribulation (*ādīnava*); realization that there is no peace, no rest, no security in anything that was once perceived as real and reliable; awareness that existential insecurity is prevalent everywhere and at all times; another aspect of the awareness of fearfulness – that

coming into being, subsistence, and passing away of physical and mental phenomena are sources of fear and tribulation; also one of the eighteen principal *vipassanās*. Speaking of all things comprising mind and matter, subtle and gross, Buddhaghosa maintains:

They appear like a forest thicket of seemingly pleasant aspect but infested with wild beasts, a cave full of tigers, water haunted by monsters and ogres, an enemy with raised sword, poisoned food, a road beset by robbers, a burning coal, and like a battlefield between contending armies appears to a timid man who wants to live in peace.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:36, PTSV p.647; cf. PPVM p.675

8. *Nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from the contemplation of aversion or disenchantment (*nibbidā*); disillusionment concerning all physical and mental phenomena, arising from the understanding that all such phenomena are potentially fearful, dangerous and a source of tribulation because they are characterized by impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*); awareness that even attractive things will provide no satisfaction, and that the attempted gratification of desires or fantasies will be tasteless and hollow; one of the eighteen principal *vipassanās*. *Nibbidā* means ‘aversion’ or ‘disenchantment’, which is still an attachment, though of a negative kind; in this context it refers to diminishing interest in material things. Buddhaghosa observes that these three *ñāṇas* are really a single *ñāṇa* or awareness concerning the nature of things.¹³

During these stages of a gradually increasing awareness of the nature of things, which arises from meditation, a meditator may feel inwardly dry and listless, even bored, lacking in joy, finding it difficult to enjoy anything, not wishing to associate with others, and so on. The world appears to offer nothing, yet it seems as if significant progress in meditation has yet to be made. He may wish to give up meditation, but at the same time, the resolve to attain *nibbāna* becomes stronger, and he is aware that there is no alternative but to keep going. These are natural feelings, common among those who follow a spiritual path.

9. *Muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from the desire for deliverance or liberation (*muñcitukamyatā*), to be free from the realm of material and mental phenomena; awareness that nothing in the world will satisfy, leading to a desire for escape into the realm of enlightenment and liberation from birth and death. Realizing the evanescent nature of material and mental phenomena, possessing an increasing awareness of impermanence, suffering and no-self, the meditator becomes averse to all

things, having no desire for anything, clinging to nothing. Buddhaghosa gives several examples of the intensity of this desire:

Just as a fish in a net, a frog in a snake's jaws, a jungle fowl shut into a cage, a deer fallen into the clutches of a strong snare, a snake in the hands of a snake charmer, an elephant stuck fast in a great bog, ... a man encircled by enemies, *etc.* – just as these are desirous of being delivered, of finding an escape from these things, so too this meditator's mind is desirous of being delivered from the whole field of phenomena (*sankhāras*) and escaping from it. Then, when he thus no longer relies on any phenomena and is desirous of being delivered from the whole field of phenomena, knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcītukamyatā-ñāṇa*) arises in him.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:46, PTSV p.651; cf. PPVM p.679

10. *Paṭisankhānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from contemplation of the foregoing meditations or reflections (*paṭisankhā*) concerning the material and mental phenomena that comprise existence; also, one of the eighteen principal *vipassanās*. Reviewing the steps he has taken in developing his understanding, a meditator's increasing awareness of the condition in which he finds himself leads to a renewed and sincere resolve to practise more and to make good his escape.
11. *Sankhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from equanimity (*upekkhā*) regarding conditioned phenomena (*sankhāra*), *sankhāras* being the aspects of mind that cognize something, generally colouring its nature in the process. The meditator is present with himself, but indifferent and detached. Abandoning feelings of fearfulness, seeing the emptiness in phenomena, no longer regarding them as aspects of 'me' or 'mine', he remains neither happy nor sad. Buddhaghosa compares him to a man who has divorced a wife he once loved – he is no longer concerned how she behaves because he no longer regards her as 'mine'.¹⁴ He further explains:

Just as a fowl's feather or a shred of sinew thrown on a fire retreats, retracts and recoils, and does not spread out, so too his heart retreats, retracts and recoils from the three kinds of becoming, the four kinds of generation, the five kinds of destiny, the seven stations of consciousness, and the nine abodes of beings (effectively, all realms of existence).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:63, PTSV p.656, PPVM p.684

Buddhaghosa says that this and the last two *ñāṇas* are really the beginning, middle and final stages of a single *ñāṇa*.¹⁵

12. *Saccānulomika-ñāṇa, saccānuloma-ñāṇa, anuloma-ñāṇa, anuloma-citta, anuloma-khanti, anuloma-mana*. Knowledge (*ñāṇa, mana*) arising from adaptation or conformity (*anuloma*) to Truth (*Sacca*) (i.e. the *Dhamma*, Buddhist teachings); complete acceptance and conviction of the *Dhamma*; sometimes described as a momentary state that harmonizes the preceding and ensuing moments of consciousness, harmonizing the lower mind (*citta*) with the higher state of mind that follows. At this stage, the reality of the four noble truths becomes completely clear – that there is suffering (*dukkha*), that it has an origin, that it can cease, and that there is a path to liberation from it. According to the commentary on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, “conformity (*anuloma*)” is the “conviction (*khanti*)”, to varying degrees, “that all phenomena are impermanent, suffering, and non-self”.¹⁶

In the commentaries to the Pali *suttas*, a non-Buddhist worldly person (*puthujjana*) is described as, among other things, possessing no *saccānulomika-ñāṇa* – no knowledge that conforms to the Truth. According to a story related in the commentary to the *Dhammapada*, a certain evil and recently retired public executioner hears a discourse from a Buddhist elder shortly before his untimely death from an accident (gored to death by a demon in the guise of a cow). But because he had been engrossed in the discourse, reaching the stage of *anuloma-ñāṇa* and coming very close to attaining stream entry, the erstwhile evil executioner is reborn in the *tushita* heaven.¹⁷

Having progressed through these stages, the meditator is now almost prepared for entry to the supramundane, other-worldly, or transcendental path. First, however, he passes through an intermediate stage:

13. *Gotrabhū-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from overcoming the lineage (*gotrabhū*); the knowledge, wisdom or insight of one who has overcome or changed the ancestry, lineage, heritage (*gotra*) or habit of the *puthujjanas* (worldly ones) and has entered the heritage of the *ariya-puggalas* (noble people), having enlightenment (*nibbāna*) as his goal; maturity knowledge; another momentary state, which severs connection with the mundane (*lokiya*) world and links the consciousness to the supramundane or transcendental path that leads to *nibbāna*; a moment of insight in which a person realizes that his higher goal is indeed *nibbāna*. Some commentators have suggested that *anuloma-ñāṇa* and *gotrabhū-ñāṇa* are so momentary that they may be considered theoretical, invented by Buddhist systematizers to explain the shift of consciousness from the mundane to the supramundane.

All of these ten *ñāṇas* make their first appearance in one of Buddhaghosa's primary sources, the relatively early *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.¹⁸ *Udayabbaya* and *bhanga* also frequently appear as terms in the Pali *suttas* in connection with the five aggregates (*khandhas*); *ādinavānupassanā-ñāṇa* and *nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa* also appear in the *suttas*, while *anuloma-ñāṇa*, absent from the *suttas*, is mentioned briefly in the *Abhidhamma*, but receives considerable coverage in the commentarial literature.

The individual is now ready to enter the supramundane (*lokuttara*) or noble (*ariya*) path (*magga*), with its four stages: stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*), and noble or enlightened one (*arahanta*). Buddhaghosa says that his seventh and final purification, that of "purification of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)" consists of the knowledge of the path (*magga*) and fruition (*phala*) of these four stages. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* also covers knowledge of these four paths and their respective fruits, which together comprise the supramundane path.¹⁹

The listing of the final three stages as the culmination of a sixteen-stage sequence has its origins among the teachings of monks and scholars of the Burmese and Thai Forest Traditions. The terms, however, are used by Buddhaghosa and others for spiritual evolution in the supramundane stages.

14. *Magga-ñāṇa, magga-citta*. Knowledge of the path (*magga*) by which all imperfections are ultimately eradicated; entry into the supramundane path (*lokuttara-magga*). The meditator now begins to develop a deepening wisdom and gnosis concerning the *Dhamma* (Way, teachings) and the path to *nibbāna*.
15. *Phala-ñāṇa, phala-citta*. Knowledge of the fruit (*phala*) of the path, in which *nibbāna* is experienced. The Pali *suttas*, reiterated by Buddhaghosa, describe four paths (*magga*), each with its own fruition (*phala*). Buddhaghosa speaks of the knowledge of the path of the stream-enterer, the once-returner, the non-returner and the *arahanta* (noble one, enlightened one), each being of a higher degree than the one before. At each stage the aspirant experiences a kind of *nibbāna*, but of an increasingly pure degree, culminating in the highest *nibbāna*, that of the *arahanta*. It is, says Buddhaghosa, these four paths and their respective fruitions that constitute the final purification – "purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)".²⁰
16. *Paccavekkhana-ñāṇa*. Knowledge arising from reflection or review (*paccavekkhana*). Buddhaghosa uses the term to define a practitioner's introspective review of any level of meditational experience. This can be of any stage of concentration (*samādhi*), or of the *jhānas*, or of the level of *nibbāna* attained. The meditator reviews the experience of the path, the fruition, the blessings attained, the imperfections overcome, those yet to

be eliminated, and so on.²¹ The *arahanta* has less to review because he no longer has imperfections requiring review. The analytical *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* categorizes nineteen forms of knowledge arising from reflection. Fifteen relate to the first three stages, and four to the last.

See also: **anupassanā** (8.5), **jñāna**, **lokuttara-magga** (►4).

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20–22, *PTSV* pp.606–97.
2. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20:90, *PTSV* pp.629–30.
3. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:1–66, 128–33, 22:1–31, *PTSV* pp.639–59, 669–70, 672–78.
4. See A.K. Warder, *Introduction, The Path of Discrimination*, *PDPM* pp.xxi–xxii.
5. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 18:1–37, *PTSV* pp.587–97, *PPVM* pp.609–20; see also *Visuddhimagga* 13:16, 23:2, *PTSV* pp.411, 698, *PPVM* pp.405, 730.
6. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 19:1–27, *PTSV* pp.598–605; cf. *PPVM* pp.621–30.
7. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20:1–130, *PTSV* pp.606–38, *PPVM* pp.631–65.
8. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20:105–30, *PTSV* pp.633–38; cf. *PPVM* pp.660–65.
9. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:1–136, *PTSV* pp.639–71; see also “ñāṇa,” in *Pali Buddhist Dictionary*, *PBD*.
10. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:3–9, *PTSV* p.640.
11. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:28, *PTSV* pp.644–45.
12. E.g. Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 782; Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 938; Kabīr, *Ādi Granth* 335, 478; Shankara, *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* 37.
13. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:44, *PTSV* p.651.
14. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:61–62, *PTSV* p.656.
15. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:79–82, *PTSV* pp.660–61.
16. *Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā*, *PSMA*, on *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 2:29, *PTSP2* p.236; cf. in *ANB2* p.35 (n.72).
17. *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* 8:1, *PTSDA2* pp.202–9.
18. *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, 1:6–10, 1:3.602–3, 2:29, *PTSV* pp.54–68, 195, *PTSP2* p.236.
19. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 1:11–14, *PTSPI* pp.69–76.
20. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 22:1–31, *PTSV* pp.672–78.
21. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 22:19–20, *PTSV* p.676.

vipassanūpakkilesa (Pa) *Lit.* insight (*vipassanā*) corruption (*upakkilesa*); ten imperfections of insight according to *Theravāda* Buddhism; ten kinds of meditation experience that can distract the meditator and delay progress.

The *vipassanūpakkilesas* first appear in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, where they are listed as distractions (*uddhacca*).¹ A more detailed description is provided by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*, which has become the classic source on the subject:

When he (a meditator) is a beginner, . . . ten imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) arise in him. For imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) do not arise either in a noble disciple who has reached penetration (of the truths) or in persons erring in virtue, neglectful of their meditation subject, and idlers. They arise only in a good man (*kulaputta*) who stays on the right track, devotes himself continuously (to his meditation subject), and is a beginner in insight. And what are these ten imperfections (*upakkilesa*)? They are: illumination (*obhāsa*), knowledge (*ñāṇa*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), bliss (*sukha*), firm resolve (*adhimokkha*), exertion (*paggaha*), understanding (*upaṭṭhāna*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), and attachment (*nikanti*) (to such experiences).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 20:105, PTSV p.633; cf. PPVM pp.660–61

Of these, only the last is in itself an imperfection, but all can result in an inflated ego when the meditator feels the need to make known to others his inner experience of light, mystical knowledge, rapture, and so forth. Buddhaghosa goes on to specify the pitfalls that can befall an eager meditator who lacks wisdom and maturity if he overestimates his spiritual attainment, falsely believing that he has become an *arahanta* (noble one, enlightened one), when in fact, his imperfections have yet to be fully eradicated. In this way, the practitioner turns a blessing and a welcome sign of progress into an imperfection and impediment. The root cause is the meditator's attachment to what should have been understood as transient, mistaking the experiences as something permanent. The twentieth-century Thai teacher Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo explains:

The subtle enemies are the ten corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*). If, when any of these arise, your powers of reference and discernment are weak, you are bound to misconstrue them. You then let yourself get taken in and carried away by them, to the point where they seem unassailable in one way or another, finally leading you to believe that you have become an *arahanta*.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, The Craft of the Heart, CHLD p.56

The Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982) provides more detail concerning the nature of the inner light (*obhāsa*):

When the meditator, in the exercise of noticing, is able to keep exclusively to the present body-and-mind process, without looking back to past processes or ahead to future ones, then, as a result of insight, (the mental vision of) a brilliant light will appear to him. To one it will appear like the light of a lamp, to others like a flash of lightning, or like the radiance of the moon or the sun, and so on. With one it may last for just one moment, with others it may last longer.

Mahasi Sayadaw, Progress of Insight, PISM pp.13–14

Buddhaghosa, however, explains how this experience can be misleading:

Illumination (*obhāsa*) is illumination (*obhāsa*) due to insight. When it arises, the meditator thinks, “Such illumination (*obhāsa*) never arose in me before. I have surely reached the path, reached fruition.” Thus he takes what is not the path to be the path and what is not fruition to be fruition. When he does so, the course of his insight is interrupted. He drops his own basic meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and sits just enjoying the illumination (*obhāsa*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 20:107, PTSV p.634; cf. PPVM pp.661–62

The American Buddhist author and teacher Jack Kornfield (b.1945) likewise observes that the mind can develop an attachment to such experiences, which hinders further progress:

You get attached, that’s right. . . . You say, “This is groovy, I want more of it.” It’s like any other drug. And you get attached to the light, or the lightness, or the joy, or the peace, or whatever it is, and then you find that you’re stuck there. So you have to discover even in that moment that there’s some deeper level of freedom. You’re still working with the breath and all these states come, and you try to hold them. Let them just come and go. Those too are not freedom; they’re simply very groovy states of mind. They’re very pleasant, they’re illuminating, light and peaceful, but they’re temporary. Has anybody had a state of mind stay?

Jack Kornfield, Eightfold Path for the Householder, EPHK p.90

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo gives an insightful portrayal of these various experiences, and how they can become negative.² “*Obhāsa*” he describes as “a bright light that enables you to see places both far and near.” “*Nāṇa*” is knowledge of things that are hidden from the mundane mind. It is

knowledge enabling you to know, in an uncanny way, things you never before knew, such as *pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, the ability to remember previous lifetimes. Even knowledge of this sort, though,

can mislead you. If you learn good things about your past, you may get pleased. If you learn bad or undesirable things about your past, you may get displeased.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Basic Themes, BTAD p.127

Such special knowledge can also be *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa* (knowledge of disappearance and reappearance), which refers to knowledge of the death and rebirth of other sentient beings:

Sometimes you may learn how people and other living beings die and are reborn – knowing, for instance, where they are reborn when they have died from this world – which can cause you to become engrossed in the various things you come to know and see. As you become more and more engrossed, false knowledge can step in, and yet you still assume it to be true.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Basic Themes, BTAD p.127

Pīti (rapture), continues Ajahn Lee, as welcome as it may be, can develop into infatuation and complacency with a state of ecstasy, “perhaps deciding that you’ve already achieved the goal”. There is also a negative side to *passaddhi* (tranquillity). It manifests when

the body is at peace and the mind serene, to the point where you don’t want to encounter anything in the world. You see the world as being unpeaceful and you don’t want to have anything to do with it. Actually, if the mind is really at peace, everything in the world will also be at peace. People who are addicted to a sense of peace won’t want to do any physical work or even think about anything, because they’re stuck on that sense of peace as a constant preoccupation.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Basic Themes, BTAD p.127

Sukha (bliss, pleasure) is similar, wherein the meditator feels “peace” and “a sense of physical and mental pleasure and ease”, becoming engrossed in “a deep and arresting sense of relaxation, stillness, ease, or freedom from disturbance”. The result is an aversion to anything perceived as painful, “seeing pleasure as something good and pain as something bad”. But “pain,” says Ajahn Lee, “is the same thing as pleasure. When pleasure arises, pain is its shadow; when pain arises, pleasure is its shadow. As long as you don’t understand this, you give rise to a kind of defilement. . . . What has happened is that you’re simply stuck on a pleasing mental state.” The meditator has thus become absorbed in the duality of pleasure and pain.

Adhimokkha (firm resolve), Ajahn Lee describes as possessing the capacity to lead to a dualistic view. It is:

being disposed to believing that your knowledge and the things you know are true. Once ‘true’ takes a stance, ‘false’ is bound to enter the picture. True and false go together, *i.e.* they’re one and the same thing.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Basic Themes, BTAD p.128

The weakness associated with *paggaha* (exertion), says Ajahn Lee, is “excessive persistence, leading to restlessness. You’re simply fastened on your preoccupation and too strongly focused on your goal.” The downside of *upaṭṭhāna* (understanding) is becoming obsessed with something that the meditator has come to understand, “refusing to let it go”.

The negative aspect of *upekkhā* (equanimity) is “indifference, not wanting to meet with anything, be aware of anything, think about anything, or figure anything out”. It assumes that “You’ve let go completely. Actually, though, this is a misunderstanding.” Lastly, *nikanti* is “being content” with these various preoccupations, becoming attached to the things you experience or see. “All of these things,” he concludes, “if we aren’t wise about them, can corrupt the heart.”

Speaking of attachment to these preliminary experiences while progressing through the *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption), Bhikkhu Khantipalo points to the advice given in the analytical Pali literature³ to review all experiences after the period of meditation is over, and to understand that – enjoyable and inspiring as they may be – such experiences are still subject to impermanence and are not states in which to linger:

People who do not practise meditation usually have much attachment to sensual pleasures, but meditators, especially those who experience *jhāna*, can become deeply attached to rapture and bliss even though they have few worldly attachments. When this is the case, no further progress is possible, so meditators are encouraged by the Buddha to reflect upon the conditioned nature of their blissful experience, to see it as impermanent and therefore as subject to deterioration. Whatever has this characteristic is also unreliable and insecure, which is the most subtle aspect of *dukkha* (suffering). Then again, experience which is liable to deteriorate and change, to be unsatisfactory, can scarcely be my self (or soul). In this way, (meditation upon) the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and not-self) can be used to break up attachment to even subtle meditation states.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.57

Although Buddhaghosa says that these experiences manifest as an initial phase of *udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa* (knowledge arising from contemplation of arising and passing away), they can in fact manifest at other stages of spiritual growth, where they can be either a source of inspiration and further progress or of attachment and spiritual stasis. Buddhaghosa lists

udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa as the first of ten stages of insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arising from contemplation (*anupassanā*), which a meditator experiences as he progresses through seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*). The advice generally given is to observe and enjoy such experiences, but not to become attached to them. In a description of the seven stages of purification and the various stages of insight knowledge, the Sri Lankan meditation master Matara Sri Ñāṇārāma (1901–1992) writes:

From the stage of knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*) up to the initial phase of the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*), the meditator becomes aware of an increasing ability to meditate without difficulty. Extraneous thoughts have subsided, the mind has become calm, clear, and serene. Owing to this serenity and non-distraction, defilements decrease and the mental continuum becomes highly purified; the body, too, manifests the same serenity. When he is engaged in contemplation in the initial phase of the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*), the meditator has to be extremely cautious. For it is precisely at this point that the imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) spring up, threatening to entice the unwary meditator away from the right path of practice. . . .

Due to the developed state of his mind at this stage, a brilliant light appears to the meditator. At first he catches a glimpse of something like the light of a lamp in the distance. Even if there is no lamp inside his hut, he seems to see one, even with his eyes open. He then discovers that this light is coming from within his own body. Though his teacher had instructed him to simply make a mental note of everything he sees, the meditator now pays no heed to those instructions. He may conclude that the teacher had not foreseen this event and was mistaken on this point. He may even presume that he is now more developed in meditation than his teacher. So he continues to enjoy the illumination without simply making a mental note of it. In such situations as these, a meditator must not fall into delusion. The teacher's advice stems from the lineage of the Buddha and the *arahantas*. Therefore the meditator should regard his teacher's advice as if it were given to him by the Buddha himself, and be diligent in making mental notes. . . .

The subtle imperfection of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) called 'attachment (*nikanti*)' is one that is latent in all other imperfections. The unskilful meditator conceives a subtle attachment to his insight that is adorned with such marvellous things as illumination; he is thus carried away by craving, conceit, and (a wrong) view. The skilful meditator, on the other hand, uses his discerning wisdom, and frees himself from this influence.

The diligent meditator should carefully make a mental note of all the imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) whenever they arise. Meditators who neglect this precaution, thinking: “After all, these are good things,” will ultimately find themselves in difficult straits, unable to advance in meditation. Therefore one should do well here to follow the advice of one’s teacher. One has to recognize all these as obstacles and to dismiss them. For all these imperfections of insight have a subtle trace of attachment (*nikanti*) hidden beneath them, and they will thus deflect one from the right path. The understanding that these imperfections are not the right path and that the avoidance of them will lead one to the path is called purification by knowledge and vision of what the path is and what it is not (*maggāmagga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*). To come under the sway of the imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*) and to go on meditating while obsessed by them is not the right path. The right path is the elimination of those imperfections and stepping onto the path of true insight – that is, onto the highroad of mental noting.

Matara Sri Nāṇārāma, Seven Stages of Purification & Insight Knowledges;

cf. SPIK pp.72–74, 78–79

1. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 11:286ff., *PTSP2* p.100ff.
2. Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, *Basic Themes*, *BTAD* pp.127–28.
3. *E.g. Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga* 23:27, *PTSV* p.704; *cf. PPVM* p.737.

vishva (S/H) *Lit.* whole, entire, universal; the world, the universe; in *Vedānta*, the one who experiences waking consciousness, the perceiver in the waking state, the *ātman* (soul, self) when experiencing waking consciousness of the gross physical world;¹ the first of the four commonly described states of consciousness, the others being dreaming (*svapna*, *taijasa*), deep sleep (*sushupti*, *prājñā*), and superconsciousness (*turīya*); also called *vaishvānara* (common to all men) and *jāgrat avasthā* (waking state).

The term also appears in a variety of expressions, such as *vishva-māyā* (illusion of the world) and *vishva-rūpa* (universal form, all-formed), the latter referring both to *Brahman* as the source of all forms and to the soul subject to rebirth, who takes on multiple forms.²

Many Indian mystics and Indian sacred texts have depicted the universe (*vishva*) as a projection of the consciousness of the Supreme Self (*Ātman*), also known as *Brahman*. The universe, the macrocosm, is closely bound up with the microcosm – the individual consciousness or soul (*ātman*) clothed in a human form that is able to realize its essential unity with the supreme *Ātman* and thus the entire universe. In fact, the macrocosm has no existence independent of the microcosm. As Shankara says, “The universe (*vishva*) has no separate existence apart from the individual (*purusha*).”³ The *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* explains:

As a spider puts forth and withdraws its web, as herbs sprout on the earth, as hair grows on the head and body of man without any effort – so, from the Imperishable, does the universe (*vishva*) spring forth. . . .

Verily, He (*Brahman*) is the indwelling spirit within all. Heaven is His head; the sun and moon His (two) eyes; the (six) directions His ears; the revelation of the *Vedas* His voice; the wind His vital force (*prāṇa*); the whole universe (*vishva*) His heart. And from His feet has the earth originated. . . .

From Him, all the oceans and mountains have originated; from Him flow rivers of every description; from Him, too, all (nutritious) herbs and saps by which the subtle body exists, surrounded by the elements of gross matter. . . .

Verily, all this is the immortal *Brahman*! He is everywhere – above, below, in front, at the back, upon the right, upon the left! This entire universe (*vishva*) is indeed the supreme *Brahman*! . . .

He who has realized the Self (*Ātman*) knows the supreme *Brahman* in which this universe (*vishva*) rests and who shines brightly. And those wise ones who are devoted to such a person and are devoid of worldly desire transcend all possibility of rebirth.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1:1.7, 2:1.4, 2:1.9, 2:2.11, 3:2, 1

The *Bhagavad Gītā* says likewise:

I see You – without beginning, middle or end; infinite in power; of boundless energy; active everywhere; with the sun and the moon for eyes; with a face that shines like a flaming fire and with spiritual radiance energizing the entire universe (*vishva*). . . .

You are the primal Divinity, the ancient Being. You are the ultimate haven of rest and safety for this world (*vishva*). You are both the knower and the known, and also the supreme Abode. O You of countless forms! By You is the whole universe (*vishva*) pervaded.

Bhagavad Gītā 11:19, 38

In this state, says Patañjali, the soul sees itself in God, and God in itself:

In the state of liberation (*kaivalya*), there is vision and perception of the Self (*Purusha*) in the entire universe (*vishva*), and vision and perception of the entire universe (*vishva*) in the Self (*Purusha*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 4:37; cf. TYPY p.369

Shankara points out that, whether in dream or in waking, everything is a projection of the mind and everything is a part of *Brahman*:

In dreams (*svapna*), when there is no actual contact with the external world, the mind alone creates the whole universe (*vishva*) consisting of the experiencer, and so on. Similarly, in waking (*jāgrat*), there is also no difference. Therefore, everything is the projection of the mind. . . .

Sages who have fathomed its secret have designated the mind as ignorance (*avidyā*), by which alone the universe (*vishva*) is moved to and fro, like cloud formations by the wind. . . .

This entire universe (*vishva*), which through ignorance (*ajñāna*) appears to be of diverse forms, is nothing else but *Brahman*, which is absolutely free from all the limitations of human thought. . . .

Verily, I am that *Brahman*, the One without a second, which is like the sky, subtle, without beginning or end, in which the whole universe (*vishva*) from the Undifferentiated down to the gross body, appears merely as a shadow.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 170, 180, 227, 512; cf. VCSM pp.66, 70, 88, 190

In his devotional poetry, Shankara says the same:

I worship the supreme Self (*Parātman*),
the primordial Seed of the universe (*jagat*),
without desire, without form,
known through *Aumkāra* (*Aum*, the primal Sound).
It is He from whom this universe (*vishva*) is born, is preserved,
and into whom the universe (*vishva*) is dissolved.

Shankara, Vedasāra-shivastotram 5; cf. in SSI6 pp.148–49

O Lord of the universe (*jagat*)!
Protect me, an orphan, from the abyss of suffering
of the phenomenal world (*saṃsāra*).
O Lord of the universe (*vishva*),
You create and destroy the universe!
and yet Your form is the universe (*vishva-rūpa*),
You are the soul of the universe (*vishva*),
You are the origin of the *guṇas* (attributes) in the three worlds!

Shankara, Shivanāmāvalī-ashṭakam 7–8; cf. in SSI6 pp.206–7

See also: **avasthā, jāgrata avasthā, turīya.**

1. See esp. *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*.
2. E.g. *Maitrī Upanishad* 2:5; *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 1:9, 5:7; *Taittirīya Upanishad* 1:4.1.
3. Shankara, on *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*; cf. in *PU* p.681.

vision(s) (Gk. *horama*, *horasis*, *optasia*, *thea*, *theama*) In religion, spirituality and mysticism, something that appears to either the physical or the inner faculties of sight; also, something that presents itself directly to the inner consciousness; sometimes called ‘visions of the night’ or ‘night visions’, night being a time of vigil, prayer and contemplation when visions may be experienced, sometimes in dreams; also known by the more encompassing term, ‘revelation(s)’.

Mystics have described visions of God, of the uncreated Being, of the divine Essence or the spiritual Beauty (the ‘beatific Vision’), of the divine Word, of angels, saints and deities, of divine light, of the inner heavens, of the underlying principles by which the creation is governed, of the past and the future, of saints both living and dead, and so forth. They have also seen visions related to their own faith and beliefs, such as the passion of Christ, the nature of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son, or the Hindu deity, Kṛishṇa. Many have heard voices. Some have seen the suffering of souls in hell. Others have been troubled by visions of demons or the devil himself, or by other negative or frightening visionary experiences.

The visions and revelations of the biblical prophets are the foundation of the Jewish religion. They are regarded as the touchstones of authenticity, and the primary means by which God communicates with His ‘chosen’ people. The books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Amos, Daniel and others are comprised largely of descriptions of their authors’ visions, many containing a rich symbolism – a common feature of religious visions. The correct interpretation of symbolic dreams and visions, as provided, for instance, by Joseph¹ and Daniel,² was regarded with great esteem. Among the apocryphal literature, the visions of Enoch, Baruch and others were held in considerable regard, as they are in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many visions are said to have been revealed by one or more angels.

The same tradition was carried forward into Christianity. In the New Testament, the transfiguration of Jesus is described by Matthew as a vision (*horama*).³ Luke, who is clearly fond of vision stories, relates that Zacharias the priest has a vision (*optasia*) of the angel Gabriel, in which the angel informs Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth will conceive and give birth to a child whom they should call John (who becomes John the Baptist);⁴ and Luke’s version of the resurrection story has a “vision (*optasia*) of angels” appearing to the women who find Jesus’ sepulchre empty.⁵ In *Acts*, a document notable for its miraculous content, Paul receives his famous vision on the road to Damascus,⁶ Jesus comforts him in a vision (*horama*) when he is facing opposition,⁷ and Paul and others have visions (*horama*) of places they must go to, and individuals they must meet.⁸ Peter also has a symbolic vision concerning what is clean and unclean (Jew and gentile), in preparation for his meeting with a Roman centurion, who has himself had a vision (*horama*) of an angel commanding him to go to a certain house in Joppa, and there to

meet with Peter.⁹ Peter also teaches that in the last days, “Your young men shall see visions (*horasis*).”¹⁰

Early Christian literature, apocryphal and otherwise, contains many vision stories. So too do the gnostic and hermetic writings of this period. Visions and revelations were a commonly used literary device. In many cases, texts were entirely visionary and revelatory in nature. In these instances, there is little doubt that visions were simply part of the telling of a good story and a way of conveying doctrine.

Visions were also an accepted aspect of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, among them Plato, Plutarch, Plotinus, and many others. In *Phaedrus*, in the allegory of the charioteer (the immortal soul) and the horses that drive it, Plato depicts the “beatific vision (*makaria opsis kai thea*)”, the “supra-celestial vision (*theōrein ta exō tou ouranou*)”, the “vision of Truth (*theōrein Talēthē*)”, the “vision of Reality (*tēs tou ontos theas*)”, the “sacred vision (*idein hiera*)”, the “mystic vision (*eudaimona phasmata muoumenos kai epopteuōn*)”, or the “vision of the Beloved (*idein to erōtikon omma*)” as the immortal soul’s ultimate goal and experience, gained after much struggle and anguish:¹¹

Every soul that is destined to assimilate its proper food, is satisfied at last with the vision of Reality (*idein to On*), and nourished and made happy by the contemplation (*theōrein*) of Truth.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 247d, PPL pp.52–53

In the *Republic*, he observes that

those who attain to this beatific vision (*tou agathou idea*) are unwilling to take any part in human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural.

Plato, *Republic* 7:517c–d; cf. DP2 p.379

Plotinus, following Plato, likewise speaks of the “vision (*thea*) of the All-Good”,¹² the “inaccessible Beauty”,¹³ the “Mighty” or “Primal Beauty”.¹⁴ “We must awaken,” he says, “and thus attain the vision (*horan*) of the Supreme”:¹⁵

He that has this vision (*idein*) – with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be melded into one with it, what wondering delight! He that has never seen it hungers for it as desirable; but he that has seen it glories in its beauty, is flooded with awe and gladness, is stricken with a shock that causes no harm. He loves with a true passion and piercing longing. At all other loves than this, he laughs, disdaining all that once had seemed so fair.

Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:6.7; cf. PA1 pp.252–53, PEC p.24

Unless you “reverse your way of thinking”, he says, to be born and live life in this world is like going to a religious festival where people go and “stuff themselves” with unholy things, becoming so absorbed that they forget to worship at the shrine of the deity – which was the actual purpose of the event:

You must reverse your way of thinking, or you will be left deprived of God. You will be like those at festivals who in their gluttony stuff themselves with things that none going to the gods may take, thinking these things to be more real than the vision (*thea*) of the god for whom they ought to be celebrating the festival; and so they leave, having taken no part in the rites of the shrine.

Plotinus, Enneads 5:5.11; cf. PA5 pp.188–89, PEC p.233

He also describes how, abandoning all intellectual knowledge, the seer becomes one with the vision of light:

Suddenly, swept beyond it all by the surge of the wave of spirit (*nous*) itself, he is lifted on high by a kind of swell, never knowing how. And the vision (*thea*) floods the eyes with light; but it is not a light by which he sees something else: the light is itself the vision (*opsis*).

Plotinus, Enneads 6:7.35; cf. PA7 pp.200–1, PEC (36) p.339

Philo Judaeus, a first-century bridge between Judaism and Greek mystical philosophy, often refers to the visions of the biblical prophets, as well as to the vision of the divine Word (*Logos*).¹⁶ But, he asserts, the most sublime vision is the soul’s vision of God (*horasis Theou*).¹⁷ As he says, “The man who truly sees ... saw the clear vision of God (*enargēs phantasia Theou*) with the unsleeping eyes of the soul.”¹⁸ Sometimes, he refers to the “vision of the Uncreated (*Agenētou thea*)”:

What else was meant by the words, “I will pour out my soul before the Lord”¹⁹ but “I will consecrate it all to Him; I will loosen all the chains that bound it tight, which the empty aims and desires of mortal life had fastened upon it; I will send it abroad, extend and diffuse it, so that it shall touch the bounds of the All, and hasten to that most glorious and loveliest of visions – the vision of the Uncreated (*Agenētou thea*)?”²⁰

Philo Judaeus, On Drunkenness 37, PCW3 pp.398–99

He also describes how the inner mind can understand and perceive the immanent action of the Divine: “The mind has a vision of God (*phantasioutai ho nous Theon*) as acting and creating the world, and controlling all that is.”²¹

Genuine visions generally come to devout and loving souls as the result of intense and concentrated contemplative prayer or meditation, although they may sometimes happen unexpectedly. Characteristically, they convey understanding of a higher spiritual reality and divine truth, generally coloured by the beliefs of the visionary. They often leave in their wake an increased or even inflamed longing for spiritual understanding.

In Christianity, visions (L. *genera visionum*) were categorized by St Augustine as either ‘corporeal (L. *corporale*)’, ‘imaginary (L. *spiritalis*)’ or ‘intellectual (*intellectuale*)’,²² a classification commonly found in later Catholicism. Corporeal visions are regarded as either supernatural manifestations of physical objects or beings to the physical eyes, or as impositions by a supernatural agency upon the physical sense of sight, resulting in an experience equivalent to that of seeing a physical object itself.

Imaginary visions, also called imaginative visions, are regarded as impositions by a supernatural agency upon the imaginative faculty of the mind, in which the vision may appear to be outside only, or may be visible only when the eyes are shut.²³ Here, the words ‘imaginary’ or ‘imaginative’ do not imply that the visions are the product of personal imagination, but only that the faculty of mental vision is active.

In reality, it can be difficult to distinguish between the corporeal and imaginative visions, since the functioning of the mind and senses are closely intertwined. Even more difficult to determine is whether a vision is a projection of the mind or the result of a supernatural agency (or a combination of both), even if the vision leaves physical traces, such as burn marks or stigmata; for in all cases, the mind of the visionary is involved. Like visions themselves, correct understanding of them would seem to lie outside the realm of reason and rational explanation.

Intellectual visions, which are regarded as being of a higher or more sublime character, involve perception in the absence of any imagery or perception of forms, and take place entirely in the inner consciousness of the visionary, with no physical or imaginary manifestations. In fact, the consciousness of the visionary is largely or completely withdrawn from contact with the world of the senses. Here, the word ‘intellectual’ may be misleading, for in this context it does not refer to the faculty of reason, but to a higher faculty of the mind – a pure understanding, a pure knowing or *gnōsis* that knows without reasoning. As St Teresa of Ávila, founder of a number of convents for her Discalced Carmelite nuns, describes it:

Nothing is seen, either inwardly or outwardly, for the vision is not imaginary. Yet without seeing anything, the soul understands what it is and where it is more clearly than if she saw it, except that nothing in particular is shown to her.

Teresa of Ávila, Testimonies 58:20; cf. CWT1 p.424, CWT3 p.326

St Teresa's intellectual visions included those of the Trinity, of Christ's nearness, of Jesus' mother, of the presence of angels and various personages, and of the soul in a state of grace.²⁴ Her earliest was of Jesus' presence at her side:

I was at prayer on the festival of St Peter, when I saw Christ at my side – or, to put it better, I was conscious of Him, for neither with the eyes of the body nor with those of the soul did I see anything. . . . Being completely ignorant that visions of this kind could occur, at first I was very much afraid and did nothing but weep. But as soon as he spoke a single word to reassure me, he made me feel as I had been before: quiet, happy, and free from fear. All the time, Jesus Christ seemed to be beside me, but as this was not an imaginative vision, I could see no form. Yet I felt very clearly that he was always present at my right hand, and a witness to everything I did. Whenever I became a little recollected or was not greatly distracted, I could not but be aware of his nearness to me.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 27:2; cf. CWT1 p.228, CWT1A1 p.170

On another occasion, Jesus even “laid himself in my arms”:

During matins that very night, the Lord, in an intellectual vision so intense it almost seemed to be an imaginative one, laid himself in my arms.

Teresa of Ávila, Testimonies 53:3; cf. CWT1 p.416, CWT1A1 p.363

This kind of vision, she observes, is more than the “consciousness of the presence of God”, experienced in contemplative prayer, in which “we seem to find Him whom we are about to address, and we seem to know that He is hearing us by the effects and spiritual feelings of great love and faith of which we become conscious”. Such an awareness, she says, is a “great favour from God, and a very sublime form of prayer, but it is not a vision”, for an intellectual vision is clearer than actual sight: “I know and affirm that he (Christ) is at my side,” she says, “with greater certainty than if I were to see him.”²⁵ She adds:

It is incorrect to think that it is as if a person were in the dark, so that he cannot see someone at his side, or as if he were blind. There is some similarity here, but not a great deal, because a person in the dark can detect the other with his remaining senses: they can hear him speak or move, or can touch him. In this vision, there is nothing like that, nor do you see darkness – on the contrary, he presents himself to the soul by a knowledge brighter than the sun. I do not mean that any sun is seen, or that any brightness is perceived; but that a light, though

unseen, illumines the intellect so that the soul may enjoy so great a blessing. It bears with it wonderful blessings.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 27:3; cf. CWT1 p.229, CWT1 p.171

Such visions can also be long-lasting. The intellectual vision, she says, is “not like an imaginative vision that is quickly gone, but lasts for many days – sometimes for more than a year”.²⁶

Her intellectual visions also extended to lesser personages. She writes, for example, of a vision of the saintly hermit and fellow founder of a convent, Doña Catalina de Cardona:

One day, after taking communion in that holy church, I became deeply recollected, and my faculties were suspended, so that I was carried out of myself. While in that condition I had an intellectual vision of this saintly woman, as a glorified body, accompanied by angels. She told me not to grow weary, but to strive to carry forward the work of making these foundations.

Teresa of Ávila, Book of the Foundations 28; cf. CWT3 pp.161–62

Although intellectual visions may be of particular personages, there is little that can be said of them in human terms, since they do not involve imagery. Imaginative visions, on the other hand, often involve exotic imagery, which lends itself better to verbal description. In fact, since inner understanding is generally present during imaginative visions, they are normally interfused with the intellectual. But while pure understanding is of a higher order than imagery, the latter is more memorable and appealing to the mind:

Although the intellectual vision . . . that reveals God without presenting any image of Him is of a higher kind, a wonderful thing happens when so divine a presence is presented to the imagination so that, despite our weakness, it can last in the memory and keep the thoughts well occupied. These two kinds of vision almost invariably occur together. In this way, with the eyes of the soul we see the excellence, beauty, and glory of the most holy humanity; and through the intellectual vision, . . . we are given an understanding of how He is God, and that He is powerful and can do all things, and commands all things, and governs all things, and fills all things with His love.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 28:9; cf. CWT1 pp.241–42, CWT1 pp.182–83

Many Christian mystics have described visions that reflect their Christian faith. The English anchorite, Julian of Norwich, and the Flemish mystic, Hadewijch, both provide good examples of the imaginative kind of vision in which the understanding is also present. The ecstatic and fantastical visions

of Hadewijch are reminiscent of those of the biblical prophet Ezekiel, and include visitations by angels who instruct her and show her spiritual realities with a Christian theme by way of symbolic visions. A number of her visions feature an eagle, whom she recognizes as one of the “four living creatures” in the “likeness of a man” who figure in the visions of Ezekiel, each of whom has four faces and four wings, one face being that of an eagle.²⁷ In one such vision, she finds herself in the heavenly Jerusalem, as a bride in the celestial marriage,²⁸ with an eagle flying over the city crying out to the souls imprisoned in the material world:

O you dead, come into the light and into the life! And all you who are unready, insofar as you are not too naked to attend our marriage,²⁹ come to our abundance and contemplate the bride, who by love has experienced all needs, heavenly and earthly! She has experienced so much need (heavenly and earthly) in this alien land that I shall now show her how she has grown in the land of darkness.³⁰ And she shall be great, and she shall see her (eternal) repose, and the voice of power shall be wholly hers.

Hadewijch, Vision 10; cf. HCW p.287

She is told that her spiritual stature has grown as a result of the suffering she has experienced in this world and because of her longing for the Divine. She then meets “an evangelist” who tells her (among other things):

You are here, and you shall be shown the glory of your exile. The city you here see adorned is your free conscience; and the lofty beauty that is here is your manifold virtues with full suffering; and the adornment is your fiery ardour, which remains dominant in you in spite of all disasters. Your unknown virtues with new assiduity are the manifold ornaments that adorn the city. Your blessed soul is the bride in the city.

Hadewijch, Vision 10, HCW p.287

In other visions, she meets St John the Evangelist, Christ and the divine Countenance seated on a throne, as in biblical visions. She sees a “great mountain”, where she beholds the divine Countenance. Five paths lead to the summit, which, as she explains more fully in one of her letters, reflect the different ways in which people come to God:³¹

I saw a great mountain, which was high and broad and of unspeakably beautiful form. Five ways went steeply upward to the mountain; they all led to the highest seat of the noble mountain, which was there on high. But they went high, and higher, and still higher, and to the highest, so that the summit itself was the highest of all and the

highest Being Himself. And I was taken up and carried upward to the mountain. There I saw a Countenance of eternal fruition, in which all the ways terminate, and in which all those who have followed the ways to the end become one.

Hadewijch, Vision 8, HCW p.282

In another, she is “taken up in a spirit” to a “high seat” on a “lofty place” where she hears a Voice and once again sees the divine Countenance:

And then I heard a Voice speaking to me; it was terrible and unheard of. It spoke to me with imagery and said: “Behold who I am!” And I saw Him whom I sought. His Countenance revealed itself with such clarity that I recognized in it all the countenances and all the forms that ever existed and ever shall exist. . . . In His right hand, I saw the gifts of His blessing; and I saw in His hand heaven in its vastness opened, and all those who will be with Him there eternally. In His left hand, I saw the sword of the fearful stroke, with which He strikes all down to death. In this hand, I saw hell and all its eternal company.

Hadewijch, Vision 6, HCW pp.278–79

Love is a recurrent theme in all the writings of Hadewijch, and in another vision, the divine Countenance tells her that He is Love itself:

Behold, ancient one, you have called Me and sought Me, what and who I, Love, am, myriads of years before the birth of man! See and receive My Spirit! With regard to all things, know what I, Love, am in them! And when you fully bring Me yourself, . . . you shall have fruition of Me as the Love who I am. Until that day, you shall love what I, Love, am. And then you will be love, as I am Love.

Hadewijch, Vision 3, HCW p.272

Of another vision, she writes:

On the Sunday before Pentecost, before dawn, I was raised up in spirit to God, who made Love known to me; until that hour, she had ever been hidden from me. There I saw and heard how the songs of praise resounded, which come from the silent love humility conceals.

Hadewijch, Vision 13, HCW p.297

Frequently, she hears loud and wonderful voices, making proclamations and utterances. She mentions that the after-effects of such visions leave her in a spiritually inebriated state:

The Voice embraced me with an unheard-of wonder, and I swooned in it, and my spirit failed me to see or hear more. And I lay in this fruition half an hour; but then the night was over, and I came back, piteously lamenting my exile, as I have done all this winter. For truly, the whole winter long, I have been occupied with this kind of thing. I lay there a long time and possessed love, or revelations, or anything else in particular that Love gave me. . . . Once I lay for three days and the same number of nights in entrancement of spirit at the countenance of our beloved; and this has often lasted for that length of time.

Hadewijch, Vision 10, 14, HCW pp.288, 304

The lingering blissful after-effects of mystical visions are commonly described. Following a vision in which she “beheld God in spirit during mass”, Angela of Foligno similarly relates:

After this vision, there remained in me an indescribable sweetness and great joy, which I do not think will ever fail me, all the days of my life.

Angela of Foligno, Book of Divine Consolation 3:9; cf. BDC pp.195–96

Henry Suso, recipient of many visions, likewise speaks of the sense of other-worldliness that follows in the wake of such experiences. Writing of himself in the third person, he describes an ecstatic vision in which, “he did nothing but gaze into the brilliant light, in which he had forgotten himself and all things. He did not know whether it was day or night.”³² And he adds:

He walked with his body, and no one saw or noticed anything outwardly in him, but his soul and his heart were inwardly full of heavenly wonders. The celestial visions went in and out in his deepest depths, and he felt somehow as if he was hovering in the air. The powers of his soul were filled with sweet heavenly scent, just as if one pours a good balsam out of a box, and the box afterwards retains a sweet smell. This heavenly odour remained with him a long time afterwards, and gave him a heavenly longing for God.

Henry Suso, Life of the Servant 1:2, LSS p.20

On another occasion, he reports that “he had a vision in which he was transported into another land. Then it seemed to him as if his guardian angel were standing very kindly before him at his right hand.”³³ And similarly:

After a time of suffering, it happened early one morning that he was surrounded by the heavenly host in a vision. Then he requested one of the bright princes of heaven to show him what God’s hidden dwelling place in his soul looked like. Then the angel said to him: “Now cast a

joyful glance into yourself, and see how God is caressing your loving soul.” Swiftly he looked in and saw that his body above his heart was clear as crystal; and he saw, in the midst of his heart, eternal Wisdom sitting peacefully, in a lovely form, and beside her sat the soul of the servant, in heavenly longing. She was leaning lovingly at the side of God, and His arms held her embraced and pressed to His divine heart. Thus she lay, embraced and in an ecstasy of love in the arms of God the beloved.

Henry Suso, Life of the Servant 1:5; cf. LSS p.29

In fact, more than a few of Suso’s visions involved meeting with angels and the “heavenly host”. He also had visions of future events, and meetings with souls who had died:

At this time, he often had visions of future and hidden things, and God allowed him, as far as it was possible, to see clearly what it looks like in heaven and hell and purgatory. Many souls appeared to him when they had departed from this world, to make known to him how it fared with them, and how they had deserved their punishment; how they might be helped, or what their reward from God was.

Henry Suso, Life of the Servant 1:6, LSS p.30

Among those who appeared to him were Meister Eckhart, who had recently died, and Mary the mother of Jesus, who “appeared in a vision and showed him the great reward that she had received from God”. Eckhart told him that he “lived in transcendent glory in which his purified soul was glorified in God”. When asked what was the “most profitable exercise” in order to be “transported into the formless abyss” of the Divine, Eckhart replied, that “he should die to himself and to his selfhood in true self-surrender. He should accept all things from God and not from creatures, and in quiet patience he should endure in the face of all wolfish men.”³⁴ The “wolfish men” are probably a reference to Eckhart’s persecutors.

Not all visions have a religious or spiritual content, as with visions concerning the past or future or other mundane affairs. In the year following the death from tuberculosis of his brother Robert at the age of twenty-four, the visionary poet and artist William Blake (1757–1827), who had earlier served a six-year apprenticeship as an engraver, had a vision of his brother. In this vision, his brother gave him a new method of printing, which Blake called ‘illuminated printing’, a method he used successfully in the production of his books.

Imaginative visions of a symbolic nature, like those of Hadewijch and the biblical prophets, are by no means uncommon. Some concern contemporary affairs. Christina, a fourteenth-century Abbess of the Convent of Engenthal near Nuremberg, who was renowned for her visions, once saw the Roman

Church represented as a magnificent cathedral, the doors of which were closed by reason of a papal interdict that had (for reasons of a political power struggle) closed the churches in some areas of Germany for as much as a quarter of a century. The singing of priests could be heard within, while the common people stood without, afraid to enter. Suddenly, a man dressed as a preaching friar appeared, and told her that he would give her words to console the forsaken crowd. The man was Christ.³⁵

The poet Frederick William Orde Ward (1843–1922) describes a vision in which he sees the natural principles behind the cosmos, and how, despite all the apparent pain and suffering, everything is orchestrated by divine love:

Betwixt the dawning and the day it came
Upon me like a spell,
While tolled a distant bell,
A wondrous vision but without a name
In pomp of shining mist and shadowed flame,
Exceeding terrible....

I saw with vision that was more than sight,
The levers and the laws
That fashion stars as straws
And link with perfect loveliness of right,
In the pure duty that is pure delight
And to one Centre draws.

I knew with sudden insight all was best,
The passion and the pain,
The searching that seem vain
But led – if by dim blood-stained steps – to Rest.
And only are the beatings of God’s Breast
Beneath the iron chain;

I knew each work was blessed in its place,
The eagle and the dove,
While Nature was the glove
Of that dear Hand which everywhere we trace,
I felt a Presence though I saw no face,
And it was boundless Love.

Frederick William Orde Ward, The Beatific Vision, in OEMV (189) pp.344–45

Switching to a more modern mindset, the twentieth-century Californian mystic Nancy Mayorga, a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, writes that visions can be “completely new” and “unthought of”:

The ... experience was a vision, an actual vision, most strange and vivid. I have had vivid dreams in my life and vivid imaginings. I had thought that visions were similar. Not at all! In the first place, dreams are related to experience. Visions can be something completely new, unthought of, unheard of, and real even beyond waking experience.

I was meditating, rested, alert, completely awake. I felt mentally efficient. And before my closed eyes appeared the strangest sight that an occidental housewife, mother, newspaperwoman, could have. It was a dark-skinned, dark-eyed boy in a white turban, an extremely beautiful boy of about ten, who looked right at me with happy, sparkling, humorous eyes. No doubt about it, he was bubbling with laughter and the laughter was at my expense, but at the same time took me in on the joke. It was Kṛishṇa. I did not have to be told, although the only Kṛishṇa I had heard of at that time was the charioteer of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. I sat trying to hold on to that vision, but it faded from view, leaving me a memory of enchanting good looks and laughing eyes that, as I say, is more vivid today than any memory of any sight I have had with my physical eyes. I learned much later, much later, that the child Kṛishṇa is worshipped by Hindu women. I don't wonder.

The experience yesterday, which finally prompted me to write, was the most unusual. I doubt if I can get the spirit of it on to paper. Let me state first that every spiritual experience I have had has been, as it was yesterday, when I was feeling fine, rested, relaxed, unworried, completely rational. And always, at the moment, energetic and efficient.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM pp.23–24

Enrapturing as visions may be, many spiritual teachers have observed, like Swami Prabhavananda, that “Visions are not important in spiritual life.”³⁶ Nancy Mayorga herself explains:

I realized suddenly that the grace of God for which I have been so ardently praying has been mine all along. This morning I started my meditation knowing actually, feeling it actually, and I really knew what it meant to have the mind flow toward God like an unbroken stream of oil. I felt His grace and nothing could interrupt it. I did not ask for it. I simply accepted. And it was unbelievable to myself that I would not want a vision or any manifestation to interrupt that tranquillity. I wanted to stay there, unmoving, forever, in that peace.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM p.88

Christian writers have similarly warned of seeking visions for their own sake. Some visions, like dreams, can be the product of the imagination. Like many others, the unknown author of the *Book of the Poor in Spirit* maintains that

some visions and images can be of the devil. And he adds that those who think that God, who is “above all images”, can actually be *seen* in an image, are mistaken:

It frequently happens that an image is granted to man which he fancies comes from grace, though it is from the evil spirit, as St Paul says: “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”³⁷ He grants this image to us in a pleasing light; nevertheless it is evil in itself. Those who are occupied with images and visions are very often fooled in this way; for they are for the most part from the evil spirit. . . .

Since the evil spirit cannot enter a really simple and pure ground, he cannot deceive a pure and simple man. The man who attaches importance to so-called visions, who preoccupies himself with images, shows that his ground is not altogether pure and simple. For in a pure and simple ground nothing is forthcoming except God and what is godlike.

Now God is invisible, elevated above all images; hence they who wish really to see Him are deceived. That which is forthcoming in a pure ground is so delicate and simple that no one can grasp it by images, nor can they even speak of it. The man who really knows the pure truth, knows well that it is true and pays no attention to visions, especially during these times.

Book of the Poor in Spirit 3:3.1, 4:7.3; cf. BPSG pp.176, 267–68

St Teresa of Ávila has much to say concerning the authenticity or otherwise of visions. ‘Advisors’, she says, who have little or no understanding of the mystical life, can be hopelessly adrift in their attitude:

Some people seem to be frightened at the very mention of visions and revelations. I do not know why they think a soul being led in this way by God is on such a dangerous path, nor what is the source of this alarm. . . . I know of a person whose confessors made her terribly depressed about such things; and yet, as she discovered later by the great results and good works which proceeded from them, they were of God.

Teresa of Ávila, Book of the Foundations 8, CWTA3 pp.40–41

She writes that in the convents of her own time there are some who “attain to perfect contemplation”, and “others (who) are so far advanced that they attain to raptures”. In addition, she says that in every convent there are “one, two or three” upon whom “the Lord bestows His favours in a different way, and at the same time He gives them revelations and visions which are clearly seen to be the work of God”. She adds, however, “I know quite well that this

does not constitute sanctity, nor is it my intention to praise such nuns as these alone.”³⁸ As she says:

The highest perfection consists not in interior favours or in great raptures or in visions or in the spirit of prophecy, but in the bringing of our wills so closely into conformity with the will of God that, as soon as we realize He wills anything, we desire it ourselves with all our might, and take the bitter with the sweet, knowing that to be His Majesty’s will.

Teresa of Ávila, Book of the Foundations 5, CWTA3 p.23

St Thomas of Villanueva similarly cautions that the contemplative is “not to desire visions or revelations, for such desire cannot come save through pride, presumption, or vain curiosity”.³⁹

Isaac of Nineveh asks the reason why “visions and revelations are granted to some”, but not to others, “who have laboured more”. And he answers his own question:

The causes of revelations and visions are many, not one. The first cause of revelations and visions is God’s desire to give a token of His mercy. . . . Some take place on account of divine providence. These are the common cases. The rest take place in order to strengthen and to encourage the weak, and to console and instruct them.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 35, On Excellence, MTIN p.166

See also: **epiphany, locutions, mystical experience, revelation(s), theōria** (8.5), **visionary** (7.1).

1. *Genesis* 40:1–23, 41:1–36.
2. *Daniel* 2:1–49.
3. *Matthew* 17:9.
4. *Luke* 1:5–22.
5. *Luke* 24:23.
6. *Acts* 9:3–6.
7. *Acts* 18:9–10.
8. *Acts* 9:10–12, 16:9–10.
9. *Acts* 10:1–20, 11:5–14.
10. *Acts* 2:17, *KJV*.
11. Plato, *Phaedrus* 247a, 247c, 247d, 248b, 250a, 250c, 253e.
12. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:4.13, *PEC* p.18.
13. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:6.8, *PEC* p.25.
14. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:6.9; cf. *PEC* pp.25–26.
15. Plotinus, *Enneads* 4:4.5, *PEC* p.161.

16. Philo Judaeus, *On the Migration of Abraham* 1, PCW4 pp.134–35.
17. E.g. Philo Judaeus, *On Rewards and Punishments* 4, 6, PCW8 pp.328–29, 332–35.
18. Philo Judaeus, *On the Life of Moses* I:52, PCW6 pp.426–27.
19. *Samuel* 1:15.
20. See also, e.g. Philo Judaeus, *Allegorical Interpretation* 3:33, PCW1 pp.368–69; *Worse Attacks the Better* 43, PCW2 pp.306–7.
21. Philo Judaeus, *Decalogue* 21, PCW7 pp.60–61.
22. St Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim* 1:12.7 (n.16).
23. See “visions and apparitions,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912.
24. E.g. Teresa of Ávila, *Testimonies* 13, 21, 20, 53, CWT1 pp.391–92, 394–96, 415–16.
25. Teresa of Ávila, *Life* 27:3; cf. CWT1 pp.228–29, CWT1A1 p.171.
26. Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle* 6:8; cf. CWT2A2 p.310.
27. *Ezekiel* 1:1–25.
28. Cf. *Matthew* 22:1–14.
29. *Matthew* 22:11–12.
30. *Job* 10:33.
31. Hadewijch, *Letter* 22, HCW pp.94–99; *Vision* 8, HCW pp.282–84.
32. Henry Suso, *Life of the Servant* 1:2, LSS p.19.
33. Henry Suso, *Life of the Servant* 1:5, LSS p.28.
34. Henry Suso, *Life of the Servant* 1:6, LSS pp.30–31.
35. Susanna Winkworth, in *HLT* p.124.
36. Swami Prabhavananda, in *Hunger of the Soul*, HSDM p.110.
37. *2 Corinthians* 11:14.
38. Teresa of Ávila, *Book of the Foundations* 4, CWT3A3 p.18.
39. Thomas of Villanueva, *Opera*, OOTV6 p.466, in SSM2 p.75.

visions and dreams (Native North American) In Native North American traditions, visions and spiritual, religious or visionary dreams are frequently perceived in the same manner: as access to the spirit world, and as sources of guidance, even of prophecy. This guidance may be of a spiritual or material nature, and can include instructions concerning healing or cures for ailments, knowledge of where animals can be found, where enemies might be hiding, and so on. Dreams and visions have been the source of various myths, legends and ritual dances, as well as solutions to social issues. Nonetheless, a distinction is generally drawn between visions and dreams, as also between spiritual or religious dreams and dreams of a mundane nature. Most dreams are regarded as being of a mundane nature.

Some idea of the rich cultural imagery and mythology with which the Native American tradition is imbued can be gained from the account of an extended vision experienced by the nine-year-old Lakota Black Elk

(1863–1950), who went on to become a deeply respected holy man and leader of his people. The account, like that of many mystical or spiritual experiences, is full of the images with which Black Elk would have been familiar. This is true of a great many mystical experiences. Christian mystics experience visions relating to their doctrines and beliefs; Hindus similarly have experiences of their deities, and visions coloured by their mythology; and so on with all other traditions. This by no means invalidates the experiences, especially since they are of such significance to those who have them, often having a deep and lasting influence on their lives. But it does indicate that the mental patterns of the individual remains a powerful influence even in many mystical experiences. The flow of ‘events’ is not too dissimilar to a dream, for both are clearly influenced by the mental patterns of the dreamer or visionary.

The vision¹ took place while the young Black Elk was unwell, and his people were travelling by horse towards the Rocky Mountains. In his vision, he is escorted by four teams of horses to receive instruction from the six Grandfathers, who are the Persons or the spirits of the sky, the earth, and the four cardinal directions:

The oldest spoke again: “Your Grandfathers all over the world are having a council, and they have called you here to teach you.” His voice was very kind, but I shook all over with fear now, for I knew that these were not old men, but the powers of the world. And the first was the power of the west; the second, of the north; the third, of the east; the fourth, of the south; the fifth, of the sky; the sixth, of the earth.

Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, BES p.25

Each Grandfather speaks in turn, and the first gives him a name: Eagle Wing Stretches. Those of the west and north having spoken,

now it was the third Grandfather (of the east) who spoke, he of where the sun shines continually. “Take courage, younger brother,” he said, “far across the earth they shall take you!” Then he pointed to where the daybreak star was shining, and beneath the star two men were flying. “From them you shall have power,” he said, “from them who have awakened all the beings of the earth with roots and legs and wings.” And as he said this, he held in his hand a peace pipe which had a spotted eagle outstretched upon the stem; and this eagle seemed alive, for it was poised there, fluttering, and its eyes were looking at me. “With this pipe,” the Grandfather said, “you shall walk upon the earth, and whatever sickens there you shall make well.” Then he pointed to a man who was bright red all over, the colour of good and of plenty, and as he pointed, the red man lay down and rolled and changed into a bison

that got up and galloped toward the sorrel horses of the east, and they too turned to bison, fat and many.

And now the fourth Grandfather spoke, he of the place where you are always facing (the south), whence comes the power to grow. "Younger brother," he said, "with the powers of the four quarters you shall walk, a relative. Behold, the living centre of a nation I shall give you, and with it many you shall save." And I saw that he was holding in his hand a bright red stick that was alive, and as I looked it sprouted at the top and sent forth branches, and on the branches many leaves came out and murmured and in the leaves the birds began to sing. And then for just a little while I thought I saw beneath it in the shade the circled villages of people and every living thing with roots or legs or wings, and all were happy. "It shall stand in the centre of the nation's circle," said the Grandfather, "a cane to walk with and a people's heart; and by your powers you shall make it blossom."

Then when he had been still a little while to hear the birds sing, he spoke again: "Behold the earth!" So I looked down and saw it lying yonder like a hoop of peoples, and in the centre bloomed the holy stick that was a tree, and where it stood there crossed two roads, a red one and a black. "From where the giant lives (the north) to where you always face (the south) the red road goes, the road of good," the Grandfather said, "and on it shall your nation walk. The black road goes from where the thunder beings live (the west) to where the sun continually shines (the east), a fearful road, a road of troubles and of war. On this also you shall walk, and from it you shall have the power to destroy a people's foes. In four ascents you shall walk the earth with power."

I think he meant that I should see four generations, counting me, and now I am seeing the third.

Then he rose very tall and started running toward the south, and was an elk; and as he stood among the buckskins yonder, they too were elks.

Now the fifth Grandfather spoke, the oldest of them all, the Spirit of the Sky. "My boy," he said, "I have sent for you and you have come. My power you shall see!" He stretched his arms and turned into a spotted eagle hovering. "Behold," he said, "all the wings of the air shall come to you, and they and the winds and the stars shall be like relatives. You shall go across the earth with my power." Then the eagle soared above my head and fluttered there; and suddenly the sky was full of friendly wings all coming toward me.

Now I knew the sixth Grandfather was about to speak, he who was the Spirit of the Earth, and I saw that he was very old, but more as men are old. His hair was long and white, his face was all in wrinkles and his eyes were deep and dim. I stared at him, for it seemed I knew

him somehow; and as I stared, he slowly changed, for he was growing backwards into youth, and when he had become a boy, I knew that he was myself with all the years that would be mine at last. When he was old again, he said: "My boy, have courage, for my power shall be yours, and you shall need it, for your nation on the earth will have great troubles. Come."

He rose and tottered out through the rainbow door, and as I followed I was riding on the bay horse who had talked to me at first and led me to that place.

Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, BES pp.27-30

In his vision, the young Black Elk now sets out on a journey, accompanied by the four teams of horses – black horses of the west, sorrel horses of the east, "with morning stars upon their foreheads", buckskin horses of the south, and white horses of the north. A voice gives him further guidance prophesying his future as a healer and leader, and he has a vision of himself as helper of his people. All this is set in symbolic imagery with which Black Elk would have been very familiar. At length, he finds himself looking upon a vision of a sick and dispossessed people:

And a voice said: "Behold a nation; it is yours. Make haste, Eagle Wing Stretches!"

I entered the village, riding, with the four horse troops behind me – the blacks, the whites, the sorrels, and the buckskins; and the place was filled with moaning and with mourning for the dead. The wind was blowing from the south like fever, and when I looked around I saw that in nearly every *tipi* the women and the children and the men lay dying with the dead.

So I rode around the circle of the village, looking in upon the sick and dead, and I felt like crying as I rode. But when I looked behind me, all the women and the children and the men were getting up and coming forth with happy faces.

And a voice said: "Behold, they have given you the centre of the nation's hoop to make it live."

So I rode to the centre of the village, with the horse troops in their quarters round about me, and there the people gathered. And the voice said: "Give them now the flowering stick that they may flourish, and the sacred pipe that they may know the power that is peace, and the wing of the white giant that they may have endurance and face all winds with courage."

So I took the bright red stick and at the centre of the nation's hoop I thrust it in the earth. As it touched the earth it leaped mightily in my hand and was a *waga chun*, the rustling tree (cottonwood), very tall

and full of leafy branches and of all birds singing. And beneath it all the animals were mingling with the people like relatives and making happy cries. The women raised their tremolo of joy, and the men shouted all together: “Here we shall raise our children and be as little chickens under the mother *sheo*’s (prairie hen) wing.”

Then I heard the white wind blowing gently through the tree and singing there, and from the east the sacred pipe came flying on its eagle wings, and stopped before me there beneath the tree, spreading deep peace around it.

Then the daybreak star was rising, and a voice said: “It shall be a relative to them; and who shall see it, shall see much more, for thence comes wisdom; and those who do not see it shall be dark.” And all the people raised their faces to the east, and the star’s light fell upon them, and all the dogs barked loudly and the horses whinnied.

Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, BES pp.33–35

Sadly, although Black Elk did much to help his people, he was never able to lead them to a paradise in this world.

See also: **spirit travel (Native North American)**, **visioning (8.5)**, **vision quest (8.5)**.

1. Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*, *BES* pp.20–47.

vitakka (Pa), **vitarka** (S), **rtog pa** (T), **xún** (C), **jīn** (J) *Lit.* thought; thinking, consideration, reflection, deliberation; from the Sanskrit *tark* (to think); in a specific sense, in the Pali Buddhist *suttas* as well as in the later *Abhidhamma* (analytical systematization of the *suttas*) and allied texts, the formation of a thought, the beginning of a thought process, the initial conception of a thought, the initial directing of the mind towards something; initial concentration upon an object or topic of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*); one of a number of mental factors (S. *chaṭṭa*, *chaitasika*; Pa. *cetasika*) or aspects of the mind that have been identified in the *Abhidhamma* literature.

Vitakka is also listed as one of the six *caritas* (behaviours), a *carita* being a person’s essential nature as a human being. The six *caritas* described in the Pali texts are: *rāga-carita* (lustful), *dosa-carita* (hateful), *moha-carita* (spiritually ignorant, deluded), *saddhā-carita* (devout), *buddhi-carita* (intellectual, intelligent), and *vitakka-carita* (discursive, prone to excessive thought and worry).

In Pali texts, *vitakka* is commonly twinned with *vicāra* as *vitakka-vicāra* (C. *xún sì*, J. *jīnshì*). *Vicāra* is further examination and consideration of something, and in a general sense *vitakka-vicāra* simply means ‘thinking and pondering’¹ or ‘reflection and discursive thinking’. In a specific sense,

however, *vitakka-vicāra* comprises the first two of the five factors (*jhānangas*) that a meditator works through when passing through the four lower *jhānas* (contemplative absorptions). In this context, *vitakka-vicāra* refers to the initial and sustained application of focused thought that are present in the first *jhāna*. On entry to the second *jhāna*, both are transcended as an even deeper, concentration without effort is attained.

Vitakka is said in the *Abhidhamma* texts to be a specific antidote to sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*),² one of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to be overcome before entry to the first *jhāna* is possible. *Thīna-middha* is weak, undeveloped, largely unconscious and diffused thought. *Vitakka* is active and consciously directed thought.

Essentially, when the mind comes into contact with something or conceives some idea, it may become interested in it and may then begin to start thinking more about that something. The initial interest is *vitakka* and the further thinking is *vicāra*. *Vitakka* is aiming the mind at something; *vicāra* is holding onto that something. *Vitakka* is an initial thought about someone; *vicāra* is thinking about the person in detail. *Vitakka* is looking at something and fixing one's gaze upon it; *vicāra* is getting to know that something in detail. A number of similes (which apply to both the general and specific usages) are given in the Pali texts to illustrate the difference between the two. *Vitakka* is like the striking of a gong; *vicāra* is like the more drawn-out resounding or reverberation of the sound of the gong. *Vitakka* is like a bee that sees a flower and orientates itself towards its target; *vicāra* is like the bee hovering over the flower. *Vitakka* is like picking up a bowl; *vicāra* is like cleaning it. *Vitakka* is like the fixed axis of a compass; *vicāra* is like the needle that revolves around it. *Vitakka* is like the flapping of a bird's wings at takeoff; *vicāra* is like a bird's carefully directed and guided flight when airborne.

Actually, *vitakka* itself is the same in both general and specific senses. When scattered, *vitakka* shifts endlessly from one thing to another, helping to keep a person bound and attached to this world. When *vitakka* is controlled and concentrated, it becomes the primary means of entering the first *jhāna*. It is *vitakka* that brings the mind to a selected object, focus, or theme of meditation. When the mind is absorbed in the higher *jhānas*, both *vitakka* and *vicāra* are inhibited by the force of deeper concentration. Using the terms in their specific sense, Ajahn Chah explains:

When sitting in meditation, the mind becomes refined, but whatever state it's in we should try to be aware of it, to know it. Mental activity is there, together with tranquillity. There is *vitakka*. *Vitakka* is the action of bringing the mind to the theme of contemplation. If there is not much mindfulness, there will be not much *vitakka*. Then *vicāra*, the contemplation around that theme, follows.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD p.104

The *Abhidhamma* analysis tends to put things into particular categories, as if the categories themselves had real existence, distinct from each other. In practice, things are far more fluid, with categories and processes merging into each other. Ajahn Chah describes how the mind in meditation shifts to and fro between focused and less focused concentration, because that is its nature:

When practising *samādhi* (concentration), we fix our attention on the in- and out-breaths at the nose tip or the upper lip. This ‘lifting’ the mind to fix it is called *vitakka*, or ‘lifting up’. When we have thus ‘lifted’ the mind and are fixed on an object, this is called *vicāra*, the contemplation of the breath at the nose tip. This quality of *vicāra* will naturally mingle with other mental sensations, and we may think that our mind is not still, that it won’t calm down, but actually this is simply the workings of *vicāra* as it mingles with those sensations. Now if this goes too far in the wrong direction, our mind will lose its collectedness, so then we must set up the mind afresh, lifting it up to the object of concentration with *vitakka*. As soon as we have thus established our attention, *vicāra* takes over, mingling with the various mental sensations.

Now when we see this happening, our lack of understanding may lead us to wonder: “Why has my mind wandered? I wanted it to be still, why isn’t it still?” This is practising with attachment.

Actually, the mind is simply following its nature, but we go and add on to that activity by wanting the mind to be still and thinking, “Why isn’t it still?” Aversion arises, and so we add that on to everything else, increasing our doubts, increasing our suffering and increasing our confusion. So if there is *vicāra*, reflecting on the various happenings within the mind in this way, we should wisely consider: “Ah, the mind is simply like this.” There, that’s the one who knows talking, telling you to see things as they are. The mind is simply like this. We let it go at that and the mind becomes peaceful. When it’s no longer centred we bring up *vitakka* once more, and shortly there is calm again. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* work together like this. We use *vicāra* to contemplate the various sensations which arise. When *vicāra* becomes gradually more scattered, we once again ‘lift’ our attention with *vitakka*.

The important thing here is that our practice at this point must be done with detachment. Seeing the process of *vicāra* interacting with the mental sensations, we may think that the mind is confused and become averse to this process. This is the cause right here. We aren’t happy simply because we want the mind to be still. This is the cause – wrong view. If we correct our view just a little, seeing this activity as simply the nature of mind, just this is enough to subdue the confusion. This is called ‘letting go’.

Now, if we don't attach, if we practise with 'letting go' – detachment within activity and activity within detachment – if we learn to practise like this, then *vicāra* will naturally tend to have less to work with. If our mind ceases to be disturbed, then *vicāra* will incline to contemplating *Dhamma*, because if we don't contemplate *Dhamma* the mind returns to distraction.

So there is *vitakka* then *vicāra*, *vitakka* then *vicāra*, *vitakka* then *vicāra* and so on, until *vicāra* becomes gradually more subtle. At first *vicāra* goes all over the place. When we understand this as simply the natural activity of the mind, it won't bother us unless we attach to it. It's like flowing water. If we get obsessed with it, asking "Why does it flow?" then naturally we suffer. If we understand that the water simply flows because that's its nature, then there's no suffering. *Vicāra* is like this. There is *vitakka*, then *vicāra*, interacting with mental sensations. We can take these sensations as our object of meditation, calming the mind by noting those sensations.

Ajahn Chah, Food for the Heart, FHAC pp.66–68

Considering *vitakka* in its general sense, the Pali *suttas* distinguish between wholesome thoughts (*kusala-vitakka*) and unwholesome thoughts (*akusala-vitakka*). *Vitakka*, in itself, is said to be neutral; it is only when the subject of thought is wholesome or unwholesome that it takes on wholesome or unwholesome attributes. Thought is an instrument; it is its content and how it is directed that makes it good or bad. Unwholesome thoughts are generated by desire, which arises from the mind's preoccupation with material things. In Buddhist understanding, they are thoughts infected with impurities such as anger, hatred, greed, desire, lust, attachment and egotism, together with various false views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) regarding the nature of things. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha says:

For a person who is disturbed by (bad) thoughts (*vitakka*),
 who is exceedingly lustful,
 who yearns for pleasurable things –
 His craving (*taṇhā*) increases more and more;
 Truly, he strengthens his bondage (to *Māra*, 'Death').

He who delights in quieting his thoughts (*vitakka*),
 who is ever mindful (*sata*),
 and dwells on what is repulsive (*asubha*) –
 He will make an end (of craving);
 He will sever his bondage to *Māra*.

Dhammapada 24:16–17; cf. DPN, DPR

According to the *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta* ('Discourse on Two Kinds of Thinking') of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha identifies just two categories of thought – good and bad, pointing out that bad thoughts hinder wisdom, obstruct the path to *nibbāna*, and are a cause of suffering to oneself and others:

Bhikkhus (monks), before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened *bodhisatta*, it occurred to me: "Suppose that I divide my thoughts (*vitakka*) into two classes." Then I set on one side thoughts of sensual desire (*kāma-vitakka*), thoughts of ill will (*byāpāda-vitakka*), and thoughts of cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*); and I set on the other side thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma-vitakka*), thoughts of non-ill will (*abyāpāda-vitakka*), and thoughts of non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā-vitakka*).

As I abided thus, diligent, ardent and resolute, a thought (*vitakka*) of sensual desire arose in me. I understood thus: "This thought (*vitakka*) of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *nibbāna*." When I considered: "This leads to my own affliction," it subsided in me; when I considered: "This leads to others' affliction," it subsided in me; when I considered: "This leads to the affliction of both," it subsided in me. When I considered: "This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *nibbāna*," it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it. . . .

It is like the last month of the rainy season, in the autumn, when the crops thicken, a cowherd would guard his cows by constantly tapping and poking them with a stick on this side and that to check and curb them. Why is that? Because he sees that he could be flogged, imprisoned, fined, or blamed (if he let them stray into the crops). So too I saw in unwholesome states danger, degradation and defilement, and in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

Majjhima Nikāya 19, *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.114–15; cf. *MDBB* pp.207–8

The *sutta* continues in the same vein, regarding thoughts of ill will and harmfulness, and their renunciation by adopting thoughts of benevolence and harmlessness. Following this, the *sutta* reproduces the standard description of the Buddha's conquest of all unwholesome states and his entry into the first and subsequent *jhānas* (meditative absorptions), culminating in his final liberation and enlightenment.

In the *Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta* ('Removal of Distracting Thoughts'), which follows the *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, the Buddha therefore advises the monks to eliminate all distracting and unwholesome thoughts (*akusala-vitakka*),

directing the mind to wholesome thoughts (*kusala-vitakka*) alone. He recommends five ways by which this may be accomplished: by changing the subject or theme of meditation to something that does not encourage the intrusion of negative thoughts; by pondering the negative consequences of unwholesome thoughts; by paying no attention to them; by examining their cause in order to bring them to a standstill; and by altogether crushing them. The discourse begins with the observation, “When a *bhikkhu* is intent on the higher mind (*adhicitta*, i.e. meditation), from time to time he should give attention to five themes (*nimittas*).” The *adhicitta* is the subtle and finer mind that prevails in the eight *jhānas*, which is, says Bhikkhu Bodhi, “higher than the ordinary (wholesome) mind”.³ In this context, these five *nimittas* are not only the selected object or theme of meditation, but are a practical means of countering the intrusion of negative or unwholesome thoughts, should they become overly persistent. To overcome negative thoughts, the Buddha first counsels changing the subject or “theme (*nimitta*)” of meditation:

When a *bhikkhu* is giving attention to some theme (*nimitta*), and there arise in him evil, unwholesome thoughts (*akusala-vitakka*) associated with desire, with hate and with delusion, then he should give attention to some other theme associated with what is wholesome (*kusala*). When he gives attention to some other theme associated with what is wholesome, then any evil, unwholesome thoughts (*akusala-vitakka*) associated with desire, with hate and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside. With the abandoning of them his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to one-pointedness, and concentrated. Just as a skilled carpenter or his apprentice might knock out, remove and extract a coarse peg by means of a fine one, so too, ... when a *bhikkhu* gives attention to some other theme associated with what is wholesome, ... his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated (on the subject of his meditation).

Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTS M1 p.119; cf. MDBB p.211

Thus, as recommended elsewhere in the *suttas*, sensual desire (*kāma*) might be countered by meditation on foulness (*asubha*) of the body; clinging to material things, by meditation on impermanence; hatred and ill will (*dosa*), by meditation on lovingkindness (*mettā*); and so on.⁴ In a similar manner, the Buddha advises countering unwholesome thoughts by pondering on the dangers and disadvantages of entertaining them:

Just as a man or a woman, young, youthful and fond of ornaments, would be horrified, humiliated, and disgusted if the carcass of a snake or a dog or a human being were hung around his or her neck, so too, ...

when a *bhikkhu* examines the danger in those thoughts (*vitakka*), ... his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated.

Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 pp.119–20; cf. MDBB p.212

If such thoughts should still arise, then the Buddha recommends simply ignoring and forgetting about them, not giving them any attention; then they will disappear of themselves, “Just as a man with good eyes who does not want to see forms that have come within his field of vision can either shut his eyes or look away.”⁵

If this is to no avail, then the Buddha advises consideration of the underlying cause of the unwholesome thought, and likewise the cause of that cause, and so on. This, he says, will eventually eliminate or still such thoughts. If even this does not work, then he should simply crush the unwholesome thoughts, “with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he should beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind.”⁶ Should a monk follow all these methods for eliminating unwholesome thoughts, he will gain mastery over his mind:

This *bhikkhu* is then called a master of the pathways of thought (*vasī vitakka-pariyāya-pathesu*). He will think whatever thought (*vitakka*) he wishes to think, and he will not think any thought (*vitakka*) that he does not wish to think. He has severed craving (*taṇhā*), flung off the fetters, and with the complete penetration of conceit (*māna*) he has made an end of suffering (*dukkha*).

Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 p.122, MDBB pp.213–14

See also: **carita** (►4), **jhāna** (8.5), **jhānanga**, **vichāra**.

1. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya 19, Dvedhāvitakka Sutta, PTSD2 p.116, MDBB pp.208–9, passim*.
2. E.g. Nārada Mahāthera, on *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* 1:7, *ASAM* pp.69–70.
3. *Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 p.119; cf. MDBB pp.211, 1206 (n.239)*.
4. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya 10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)*, 37 (*Cūlatanḥāsankhaya Sutta*), 50 (*Māratajjaniya Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.57–59, 251, 255, 335–36.
5. *Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 p.120; cf. MDBB p.212*.
6. *Majjhima Nikāya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 p.120, MDBB pp.212–13*.

vṛitti (S/H) *Lit.* way of existence; course of action; mode of life, conduct, behaviour, or mental attitude; state, condition; instinct, natural tendency; occupation, profession; wave, modification, transformation, restriction;

from the Sanskrit root, *vṛit* (to exist); commonly used in yogic literature as *chitta-vṛittis* (waves of the mind); the ever-changing states, thoughts and modifications of the mind, the restless waves and vibrations of the mind. A *vṛitti* is also a commentary on or explanation of another text.

It is the constant movement of the mind that obscures awareness of the Divine. Hence, Patañjali says that the purpose of *yoga* is to control the constant waves (*vṛittis*) of disturbance that pass through the *chitta* (memory, mind energy). He describes five such *chitta-vṛittis*: *pramāṇa* (source of valid knowledge); *viparyaya* (erroneous knowledge, illusion, misinterpretation); *vikalpa* (fancy, imagination, opinion, doubt); *nidrā* (sleep); and *smṛiti* (memory).¹

In respect of the various faculties of the mind, the *vṛittis* or modifications are effectively those faculties themselves. Thus the four faculties or modifications of the human mind, the *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner organ), are *vṛittis* of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. These four are: *manas* (sense-related mind function); *chitta* (memory-related mind function); *buddhi* (intellect); and *ahamkāra* (I-ness). Any activity in any of these faculties is also a wave or *vṛitti*. Thoughts, whether of the world or of *Brahman*, are *vṛittis*, as are emotions, memories, reasoning, exercise of the will, and so on. Moreover waves or changes to the higher or universal mind are also *vṛittis*. Since the mind, higher or lower, is always moving, with shapes and patterns constantly forming and disappearing, the essential characteristic of the mind is that of the *vṛittis*.

Human qualities, good or bad, are also simply waves in or characteristics of the mind:

Chastity, non-injury, forgiving even the greatest enemy, truth, faith in the Lord – these are all different *vṛittis*. Be not afraid if you are not perfect in all of these; work, they will come.

Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga*, CWSVI p.193

Yoga psychology considers not only the *vṛittis* that pass through the mind in an endless stream, but also the impressions (*saṃskāras*) left in their wake. In fact, it is from these impressions that many *vṛittis* arise. Moreover, all actions and sensory perceptions, significant or insignificant, automatically modify the mind, so these too are *vṛittis*. It is all these, together with the accumulated *karma* (also stored as impressions in the mind), that form the basis of both future lives and what Western psychology calls the subconscious mind.

It is the higher aspect or real nature of the *ātman* (self, soul) blended with the *vṛitti* of intellect that gives rise to the idea of personal knowledge:

By the indiscriminate blending of the two – the existence-knowledge (*sat-chit*) aspect of the self (*ātman*) and the thought wave (*vṛitti*) of the intellect (*buddhi*) – there arises the notion of ‘I know.’

Shankara, *Ātmabodha* 25, ABSC p.49

Indeed, the mind, in which the *vṛttis* arise, actually gets its seeming intelligence from the soul or real self, which is obscured by those same *vṛttis*:

The real man is behind the mind; the mind is the instrument in his hands; it is his intelligence that is percolating through the mind. It is only when you stand behind the mind that it becomes intelligent. When man gives it up, it falls to pieces, and is nothing. Thus you understand what is meant by *chitta*. It is the mindstuff, and *vṛttis* are the waves and ripples rising in it when external causes impinge on it. These *vṛttis* are our universe.

The bottom of a lake we cannot see because its surface is covered with ripples. It is only possible for us to catch a glimpse of the bottom when the ripples have subsided, and the water is calm. If the water is muddy or is agitated all the time, the bottom will not be seen. If it is clear, and there are no waves, we shall see the bottom. The bottom of the lake is our own true Self; the lake is the *chitta* and the waves the *vṛttis*.

Swami Vivekananda, *Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms*, CWSVI p.202

Therefore, as Patañjali insists, *yoga* or any spiritual practice begins with controlling the otherwise endless mental chatter, the waves of the mind:

All *prāṇāyāma* practices should be done with a concentrated mind. The wise man should not permit the waves of the mind (*manovṛtti*) to arise.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:123; cf. *HPSD* p.125

A man of self-knowledge has his mind completely purged of all delusion, inertia and so on that obstruct the vision of Reality. In such a state, all the functions (*vṛttis*) of the mind cease to operate, and it is as good as destroyed. Then the final realization bursts forth, of which no description is ever possible.

Swami Nityaswarupananda, on *Ashṭāvakra Saṃhitā* 17:20; cf. *ASSN* p.125

Jain philosophy speaks of a number of *vṛttis* or modes of conduct such as *nīchaiḥ-vṛtti* (humble behaviour), *sāvadya-vṛtti* (blameworthy behaviour), and *vṛtti-parisaṃkhyāna* (accepting food while begging only if certain secret conditions are met, but which have been kept as a personal secret).

See also: **chitta-vṛtti**.

1. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 1:2, 5–11.

wādī (A), **vādī** (P) *Lit.* valley; well-known in Sufism from ‘Aṭṭār’s use in his allegorical *Conference of the Birds*, where he speaks of the Sufi *maqāmāt* (stages, stations) as valleys (*vādī*),¹ that must be crossed by the wayfaring birds.

The allegory describes the spiritual odyssey of a group of birds (souls) back to God. They are led by a hoopoe (the *shaykh* or spiritual master), who describes the journey that lies ahead. Here, the “hoopoe” is speaking to the other birds about the journey to their king, the *Sīmurgh* (God):

“Before we reach our goal,” the hoopoe said,
 “the journey’s seven valleys (*vādī*) lie ahead;
 How far this is the world has never learned,
 for no one who has gone there has returned –
 Impatient bird, who would retrace this trail?
 There is no messenger to tell this tale,
 and they are lost to our concerns below –
 how can men tell you what they do not know?
 The first stage is the valley (*vādī*) of the quest (*ṭalab*);
 Then love’s (*‘ishq*) wide valley (*vādī*) is our second test;
 The third is insight into mystery (*ma‘rifat*),
 The fourth detachment and serenity (*istighnā*) –
 The fifth is unity (*tawḥīd*); the sixth is awe (*ḥayrat*),
 a deep bewilderment unknown before;
 The seventh poverty (*faqr*) and nothingness (*fanā*) –
 And there you are suspended, motionless,
 till you are drawn – the impulse is not yours –
 a drop absorbed in seas that have no shores.

‘Aṭṭār, *Conference of the Birds* 3226–33, MTAN p.380, CBD p.166

See also: **manzil**, **maqām**.

1. E.g. ‘Aṭṭār, *Conference of the Birds* 3226–33, MTAN p.380, CBD p.166.

waḥdat al-shuhūd (A), **waḥdat-i shuhūd** (P) *Lit.* oneness (*waḥdat*) of witnessing (*shuhūd*). *Waḥdat* means oneness, singleness, unity, and can also imply independence, self-containment, solitude, or loneliness. *Shuhūd* comes from the verb *shahida* (to witness, to experience personally, to see with one’s own eyes) and is roughly translated into English as ‘witnessing’.

Mystical experience can be understood as a matter of *shuhūd*, of witnessing; it is the science of ‘seeing with one’s own eyes’ that which is otherwise called the Unseen (*al-Ghayb*). Most of humanity knows of *al-Ghayb* only from hearsay, and disagrees over interpretations. When a person begins to see the Unseen (*al-Ghayb*), the process is called, in Sufi terms, “seeing with

God's eyes". The distinction between seer and seen, between knower and known, blurs and is lost.

Waḥdat al-shuhūd expresses the same truth as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (oneness of being) – that there is only one Being, and everything is an expression of that one Being or divine Essence. Since the witnesses (individual beings) and the Witnessed are really both a part of the same one Being, the oneness of all being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is the same as the oneness of all witnessing (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). The One who is witnessing the creation is only One, although at the physical level of the creation it may appear that there are a multitude of individuals, each witnessing and knowing its own small area of the creation.

See also: **waḥdah** (2.2).

waḥy (A/P) *Lit.* revelation, inspiration; that which comes from a divine source; direct revelation from God; mystic experience; from *waḥá* (to inspire, to reveal to someone). In the *Qur'ān*, the similar term *yūḥá*, from the same root, is also used as both verb and noun.

The term is usually reserved for the revelations given to prophets of the highest order, as opposed to *ilhām* (inspiration), the revelations sent to mystics of a lesser order. It is also commonly understood that since Muḥammad received his revelation from the angel Gabriel, *waḥy* is that which is conveyed to a human being by an angel.

The *Qur'ān* makes frequent references to the *waḥy* sent to the Prophet Muḥammad in this manner. As God instructs the Prophet to tell people:

Say: "This *Qur'ān* has been inspired (*ūḥiya*) in me."

Qur'ān 6:19; cf. MGK

The Lord says: "I have chosen you:

Listen, then, to the inspiration (*yūḥá*) sent to you."

Qur'ān 20:13; cf. AYA

Nonetheless, Muḥammad is instructed to let the people know that he is a man like others:

Say: "I am but a man like you.

It is revealed to me by inspiration (*yūḥá*)

that your God is one God:

So stand true to Him,

and ask for His forgiveness."

Qur'ān 41:6; cf. AYA

Here, as elsewhere, it is clear that Muḥammad never claimed divine status; he only emphasized that the source of the *waḥy* he received was God:

It is not for me of my own accord, to change it:
I follow naught but what is revealed (*yūḥá*) to me.
Qur'ān 10:15; cf. AYA

Although he refers to himself as a fellow “companion” on the path, he always stresses the source of the teachings he brings:

Your companion is neither astray nor being misled,
nor does he say aught of his own desire.
It is no less than inspiration (*waḥy*) sent down to him:
he was taught by one mighty in Power, endowed with wisdom.
Qur'ān 53:2–6; cf. AYA

Muḥammad is counselled not to fear the opposition of men, but only to follow the inspiration received from God:

O Prophet! Fear *Allāh* and hearken not
to the unbelievers and the hypocrites:
Verily, *Allāh* is full of knowledge and wisdom.
But follow that which comes to you
by inspiration (*yūḥá*) from your Lord.
Qur'ān 33:1–2; cf. AYA

Muḥammad is also warned to have patience because the inspiration will be coming in stages; he should not assume he knows all before the revelation is complete:

Be not in haste with the *Qur'ān*,
before its revelation (*waḥy*) to you is completed,
but say, “O my Lord, advance me in knowledge.”
Qur'ān 20:114; cf. AYA

The *Qur'ān* itself lists the ways in which God communicates with human beings:

It is not fitting for a man that *Allāh*
should speak to him except by inspiration (*waḥy*),
or from behind a veil,
or by the sending of a messenger (*rasūl*) to reveal,
with *Allāh*'s permission, what *Allāh* wills.
Qur'ān 42:51; cf. AYA

The veil, here, is that of the spiritual ignorance that besets humanity. Rūmī says that *wahy* came to the Prophet precisely because humanity was unable to see the light or receive the revelation of God (*wahy-i Haqq*):

If everyone had the eye and the strength
to receive light from the sun and heaven,
no moon and stars would be needed
to serve as witnesses to the sun.
The moon (the Prophet) is saying
to earth and cloud and shadow,
“I am a man; I am one like you,
but to me is it revealed (*yūḥá*) (that your God is one God).¹
Like you, I was dark in nature:
the sun’s revelation (*wahy*) has given me this light.”

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3657–60; cf. MJR2 pp.198–99

Speaking of one who has studied traditional religious literature and, putting his faith in it, presents arguments to rebut the wisdom of the saints, Rūmī also says:

Would that, like a child, he had been ignorant of devices,
so that, like children, he might have clung to his mother,
or that he had not been filled with traditional knowledge,
but had carried from a saint
the knowledge (*ilm*) divinely revealed (*wahy*) to the heart!
When you bring forward a book as if it were revelation (*wahy*),
your soul, which is itself revelation (*wahy*), reproaches you.
Know that, beside the breath (words) of the *quṭb* (saint) of the time,
traditional knowledge is like performing the ritual ablution
with sand when water is available.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:1415–18; cf. MJR4 p.350

The true nature of the soul, he points out, is that of illumination or revelation – and of an order far higher than the revelation of holy books. Elsewhere, Rūmī speaks of the soul as the *rūḥ-i wahy* (spirit of revelation).²

In accordance with the *Qur’ān* and Islamic belief, many Sufis are careful to distinguish between the *wahy* given to Muḥammad and the earlier prophets and the *ilhām* (inspiration) and *kashf* (unveiling) given to lesser mystics. Many therefore take a more or less traditional approach when it comes to definitions of *wahy*. Tahānawī says in his Sufi dictionary:

Any information or instruction given to someone else, whether in speech or in writing, as a message or as an indication, may be termed

revelation (*waḥy*). In theological usage, it refers to that which God caused to descend upon the Prophet.

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.383, in SSE8 p.48

Niʿmat Allāh Valī differentiates between *waḥy* and *ilhām* (inspiration):

The difference between revelation (*waḥy*) and inspiration (*ilhām*) is that inspiration (*ilhām*) involves a direct experience while revelation (*waḥy*) occurs through an angelic intermediary. The *ḥadīth* (sayings traditionally ascribed to the Prophet) are not said to be revelation (*waḥy*), even though they were the utterance of God, as is the *Qurʾān*. Revelation (*waḥy*) is acquired through contemplative vision (*shuhūd*) and audition of an angel's words. It proceeds from visionary revelation (*kashf-i shuhūdī*) in contemplative vision (*kashf-i maʿnī*), while inspiration (*ilhām*) comes solely through pure spiritual revelation (*kashf-i maʿnī*).

Revelation (*waḥy*) occurs to the elect of prophecy while inspiration (*ilhām*) comes from the all-knowing King to His elect friends.

Revelation (*waḥy*) is conditional upon its propagation, while the inspiration (*ilhām*) that came to the Prophet was proof in itself. Some maintain that it does not constitute a proof for all, but solely for the one inspired.

Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī, Rasāʾil, RNV3 pp.181–82; cf. in SSE8 pp.48–49

Waḥy is thus generally understood as the revelation given to the prophets. Nevertheless, using a verb form of *waḥy*, the *Qurʾān* also indicates that everything in creation is inspired by God to perform its function or behave in the way it does. It is said that “God has inspired (*awḥá*) the bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in human habitations;”³ and likewise the heavens and the earth are given their respective roles to play.⁴ And regarding the upheavals in the earth on the Day of Judgment, the *Qurʾān* also says, “For your Lord will have given her (the earth) inspiration (*waḥy*).”⁵ Referring to these instances, and speaking broadly, therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī observes:

Revelation (*waḥy*) may be given to every kind of creature, including angel, *jinn*, man, animal, plant, and inanimate object. Among animals, God mentioned the bee, and among inanimate objects He mentioned the heaven and the earth.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:631.35, FMIA4 (4:285) p.390, SPK p.403

Rūmī also suggests that there is some room for flexibility in the interpretation of the term, and that it is really only a question of terminology:

It is said that after Muḥammad and the prophets, revelation (*waḥy*) does not descend upon anyone else. Why not? In fact it does, but then it is not called revelation (*waḥy*). It is what the Prophet referred to when he said, “The believer sees with the light of God.” When the believer looks with God’s light, he sees all things: the first and the last, the present and the absent. For how can anything be hidden from God’s light? If something is hidden, then that is not the light of God. Therefore, the true meaning is revelation (*waḥy*), even if it is not called revelation (*waḥy*).

Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 31, KFF p.128; cf. DRA p.139, in SPL p.120

Referring to a passage in the *Qur’ān*, he also says that the true revelation is the “Water from heaven”,⁶ the divine creative power, which is the underlying divine energy that creates and sustains everything. Contact with this power provides mystic understanding of everything:

Know, then, that the blessed Water from Heaven
is the revelation (*waḥy*) for all hearts
and the true explanation of all things.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:4317; cf. MJR4 p.241

Although revelation from God is sometimes expressed in human terms as God’s speech, no words are actually involved. The Speech or Word of God is this same creative power, which is heard by the “spiritual ear” and seen by the “spiritual eye”:

If you prefer that the mind (*hūsh*) of your spirit (*jān*)
should not be in perplexity,
cease stuffing cotton wool into your spiritual ear,
so that you may understand these riddles of His,
so that you may understand both the secret sign and the open.
Then the spiritual ear becomes the place where *waḥy* can descend.
What is *waḥy*? – A Speech (*Guftī*) hidden from sense perception.
The spiritual ear and eye are other than this sense perception:
the ear of reason and the ear of opinion are destitute of it.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1459–62; cf. MJR2 p.80

The inner sound of this creative power has been likened by mystics to that of a bell and other musical instruments. In fact, when Muḥammad was asked how revelation (*waḥy*) came to him, he replied that it was “Like the ringing of a bell (striking of *ajrās* – little bells – on stone), penetrating my very heart, rending me, and that way is the most painful.”⁷ Thus, Rūmī counsels stilling the noise of the chattering mind so that this sound of revelation can be heard:

Be silent so that you may hear God's revelation (*waḥy*):
for that revelation (*waḥy*) is like a hundred thousand lives.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 233:2643, KSD1 p.147

See also: **ilhām**, **kashf**, **rūḥ-i waḥy** (5.1), **tajallī**, **tanzīl** (3.1).

1. *Qur'ān* 18:110, 41:6.
2. *Rūmī, Maṣnavī* II:3258–59; cf. *MJR2* p.390.
3. *Qur'ān* 16:68; cf. *AYA*.
4. *Qur'ān* 41:9–12.
5. *Qur'ān* 99:5; cf. *AYA*.
6. *Qur'ān* 50:9.
7. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:1.2, in *CEI* p.335; cf. in *MP* p.39.

waḥy-i dil (A/P) *Lit.* revelation (*waḥy*) of the heart (*dil*); inspiration of the heart; used by *Rūmī* for the highest revelation, the revelation or inspiration of God (*waḥy-i Haqq*):

The revelation of God (*waḥy-i Haqq*)
is not like astrology or geomancy or dreams –
and God best knows what is right.

The *ṣūfīs* in explanation
call it the revelation of the heart (*waḥy-i dil*)
to disguise it from the vulgar.

Take it to be the revelation of the heart (*waḥy-i dil*),
for that is the place where He is seen:

How can there be error when the heart (*dil*) is aware of Him?

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:1852–54; cf. *MJR4* p.375

In this context, “heart” means the innermost places of the soul or spirit. Since the revelation of God (*waḥy*) is a term traditionally used for the revelation given to Muḥammad and the prophets, *Rūmī* says that Sufis call the revelation received by other mystics the “revelation of the heart” so that people should not be disturbed. But he points out that in reality the two are the same.

See also: **dil** (►1), **waḥy**.

wairua (Mo) *Lit.* shadow, spirit; a Māori term for the spiritual and mental aspects of a human being; the soul or spirit; more generally, all non-material aspects of a human being, from the dream body, the subtle body and the mind to the immortal soul, which is also known as the *awe*; a disembodied but sentient

spirit; the vital essence or vital spirit believed to be present even in inanimate objects, and the force by which they exist.

The writer, poet, naturalist and ethnologist Johannes Andersen (1873–1962) summarizes the spread of meaning encompassed by *wairua*:

The soul (*wairua*) leaves the body at death, and the soul is visible to those endowed with second sight, the *matakite* of the Māori. The *wairua* may also leave the body during sleep and wander about, the remembrance of that wandering constituting a dream. After the death of the body, the *wairua* may wander for a time, and may be seen, as our ‘ghost’; but it dies a second death, shedding from it what of the earthly still remains. After that shedding, it can no longer be seen, even by the *matakite*; it is now the *awe*, which, whilst it cannot be seen, may be felt. The *awe* is the ‘spirit’.

Johannes Andersen, “Maori Religion,” *MRJA* p.545

Concerning the *wairua* as the dream body, the New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) writes:

The *wairua* may be termed the astral body, an intelligent spirit or essence, a sentient spirit. It is the *wairua* that leaves the body during sleep (*i.e.* when the sleeper dreams), thus the *wairua* can leave the body without injury thereto, though if one’s *hau* (vital essence) be taken away the body perishes. . . . The *wairua* of a person, when that person is dreaming, has left his body, and is probably at some distant place (of which such person is dreaming). It is probably greeting the spirits (*wairua*) of other persons, possibly those of the dead, or is on the look out for any danger which threatens its physical basis, that is to say – the body of the sleeper.

Hence it is exceedingly bad form to waken a sleeping person suddenly, as by shaking him or calling to him in a loud tone of voice. Rather should you allow time for the *wairua*, which may be absent, to return to the body of the sleeper. Hence, the old Māori will waken a sleeper by calling gently to him and gradually raising his voice, thus giving the *wairua* warning and time to return. Should a person be awaked suddenly – his body starts or moves suddenly, that is *oho mauri*, it is the *wairua* returning to the body, it is back in a moment, but it is somewhat of a shock to the person. The *wairua* lives on after death of a person, but the *mauri* or spark of life is extinct, and the *manawa ora* or breath of life has departed for all time.

I have heard it stated by natives that the *wairua* is the source of all moral ideas, prompting a person to perform good or evil actions.

Elsdon Best, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” *SCM1* pp.177–78

Best also observes that to the Māori all things, including inanimate objects, are imbued with *wairua*, understood as a universal spiritual essence:

The Māori tells us with no uncertain voice that all things possess a *wairua*, but I do not think that he would claim a separable soul for inanimate objects, but merely a vital spirit without which the object could not exist. An old native once said to me, “If all things did not possess a *wairua*, then they would all be lifeless, and so decay.” He assured me that even stones possess a *wairua*, otherwise they would not be entities; they could not be seen. We are also told by natives that all things possess a *mauri* (life force); but, as applied to inanimate objects, the two terms may possibly be applied to the same quality. A missionary once said to (the *tohunga*) Te Mātorohanga (fl.1836–1865), “Your religion is false; it teaches that all things possess a soul.” The old man replied, “Were a thing not possessed of the *wairua* of the *atua* (ancestral deities), then that thing could not possess form.”

Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB pp.8–9

Best also quotes the mid-nineteenth-century Māori *tohunga* (priestly adept), Nēpia Pōhūhū of Kahungunu: “There is but one soul (*wairua*) of all things.”¹

See also: **tīramaroa**, **tuku wairua** (8.3), **wairua** (►1).

1. Nēpia Pōhūhū, in *Maori School of Learning*, MSLB p.26.

wajd (A/P) *Lit.* ecstasy, rapture; related to the verb *wajada*, meaning to find, to encounter, to experience, to obtain, and to feel intensely. *Wajd*, therefore, combines the meanings of ‘intense feeling’ with ‘finding’ and ‘experiencing’. In Sufism, *wajd* is thus the intensely joyful feeling arising from a direct experience of the inner realities. Practically all mystics have said that the nature of God is supreme love. Because the soul is of the essence of that love, the natural relationship between the two is one of love. This divine love unites the soul to the Divine in a state of indescribable rapture and ecstasy:

Ecstasy (*wajd*) . . . is the illumination of one’s innermost consciousness by an influx of inspiration, which the spirit absorbs, the fragrance of which reaches the heart.

Ibn Khafīf Shīrāzī, Sīrat, SSK p.215, in SSE1 p.181

Wajd may arise as a result of prolonged spiritual exercise:

Ecstasy (*wajd*) is the blessed plenitude of spirit provoked by the exercise of invocation, and blessed plenitude of soul in communion with the spirit.

Allāh then gratifies His friend (the seeking soul) with a cup filled with wine that has no equal, and which intoxicates him with a spiritual drunkenness. His heart then seems endowed with wings, which raise him to the gardens of sanctity. At this moment, the enraptured one, submerged in this indescribable magnificence, swoons away, losing all consciousness (of self).

Al-Jilānī (Unsourced), in TTWP p.1033

Ecstasy (*wajd*) is what happens upon your heart and comes upon it without any intention or self-conscious effort. In this regard, the *shaykhs* say: ecstasy (*wajd*) is a happening, though ecstasies are the fruits of devotions (*awrād*). The more your devotions increase the more graces (*laṭā'if*) you receive from *Allāh*.

Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ p.37, in EIM p.113

The experience, however, cannot be repeated at will. In this sense, the visitation of *wajd* can be considered spontaneous, whether or not it comes as a result of spiritual practice:

Wajd refers to an infusion that strikes the heart spontaneously, without effort. . . . It is said to resemble a ray of light that flashes forth suddenly and is quickly extinguished.

Jurjānī, Ta'rīfāt, KTIJ p.225; cf. in SSE1 p.180

The experience is often temporary and fluctuating. As soon as the mystic becomes self-conscious, the ecstasy slips away:

When I rejoice in my ecstasy (*al-wajd*) –
as soon as I perceive this ecstasy (*al-wajd*) –
I lose the Existent One in ecstasy.
One who is consoled by ecstasy (*al-wajd*) is delighted by it,
but ecstasy (*al-wajd*) does not exist for the seer of God.

Junayd, in Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.293, in SSE1 p.183

In light of this, Shiblī said, “Whenever I suppose that I have lost it, I find it; and whenever I imagine that I have found it, I lose it.”

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.292, in SSE1 p.182

As implied by the root meaning of the word, *wajd* is the result of an encounter or experience. Often, it is associated with an experience of the divine sound and light:

Wajd refers to the heart's apprehension of the sweetness of the lights of eternity, the purity of contemplative vision (*mushāhadah*), and delight at hearing God's call.

Rūzbihān, Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyāt 392:1079, CPS p.558, in SSEI p.180

Referring specifically to the *wajd* of hearing the divine Sound, 'Ināyat Khān writes:

The more a Sufi listens to the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī*, the Sound of the Abstract, the more his consciousness becomes free from all the limitations of life. The soul then floats above the physical and mental planes without any special effort on man's part, which shows its calm and peaceful state. . . . His countenance becomes radiant. He experiences the unearthly joy and rapture of *wajd*. When ecstasy overwhelms him, he is neither conscious of the physical existence, nor of the mental. This is the heavenly wine, to which all Sufi poets refer, and which is totally unlike the momentary intoxications of this mortal plane. A heavenly bliss then springs in the heart of a Sufi, his mind is purified from sin, his body from all impurities, and a pathway is opened for him towards the worlds unseen. He begins to receive inspirations, intuitions, impressions, and revelations, without the least effort on his part. He is no longer dependent upon a book or a teacher, for divine wisdom, the light of his soul, the Holy Spirit, begins to shine upon him.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.67

Similarly, Anṣārī speaks of the *wajd* kindled by vision of the inner light:

Ecstasy is a flame that is kindled by vision – vision of something that arouses (a divine) restlessness. It comprises three degrees: (1) A phenomenal ecstasy, of which the faculties of the ear, eye or thought partake, whose effect may remain or disappear. (2) An ecstasy of which the spirit partakes, which is accompanied by either a flash of pre-eternal light, the hearing of the 'Call of the Covenant', or a loving fascination with the Truth. The effect of this ecstasy lingers on, either enrobing the mystic with its special attire or gracing him with its own radiance. (3) An ecstasy that transports the devotee from the clutches of this world and the next, cleanses his spiritual nature of the impurities of sensual pleasures, and frees him from servitude to 'clay and water' (the body).

Anṣārī, Manāzil al-Sā'rīn 66, MSA pp.198–99; cf. in SSEI pp.184–85

Wajd is an intense feeling, and may be experienced as joy or as the pain of separation from the Divine and annihilation of the self. The power of the

divine attraction rips one away from one's individual self, and the resultant ecstasy may feel like joy or a yearning, bittersweet sadness:

Junayd declared: "By ecstasy (*wajd*) is meant dissociation from one's personal qualities while one's essence is graced with joy." Ibn 'Aṭā' said, "By ecstasy (*wajd*) is meant dissociation from one's personal qualities while one's essence is filled with a bittersweet sorrow (*ḥuẓn*)."

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.292; cf. in SSE1 p.181

Wajd can include both the rapture of union and the agony of separation. It is felt with all parts of one's being:

Ecstasy (*wajd*) is a fire that is kindled from striking the stone of free will against the iron of spiritual need. It possesses three aspects: an ecstasy (*wajd*) of the mind (*naḥs*), an ecstasy (*wajd*) of the heart (*dil*), and an ecstasy (*wajd*) of the soul (*jān*).

The mind's ecstasy (*wajd*) overpowers the intellect, puts patience to flight, and reveals the invisible. This ecstasy (*wajd*) is spiritual in nature.

The heart's ecstasy (*wajd*), however, puts such a strain on one's endurance that one is driven to move, to cry out and rend one's clothes. This ecstasy (*wajd*) is also spiritual in nature.

But the ecstasy (*wajd*) which befalls the soul (*jān*) bestows delight in the vision of God, drowns the mind (*naḥs*) in Truth/Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*), and beckons the soul towards severance from the body. One who experiences this ecstasy (*wajd*) is the object of God's regard.

Anṣārī, Ṣad Maydān 89, in SMA p.67, MSA p.200; cf. in SSE1 p.185

Mystics have always stressed that the real and pure ecstasy is not to be expressed outwardly. The more it is expressed outwardly, the more it is dissipated. 'Ināyat Khān enumerates five types of *wajd*, those that evoke outward expression such as singing and dancing being of a lower nature than the *wajd* of the saints and prophets:

There are five aspects of *wajd*: *wajd* of dervishes, which produces a rhythmic motion of the body; *wajd* of idealists, expressed by a thrilling sensation of the body, tears, and sighs; *wajd* of devotees, which creates an exalted state in the physical and mental body; *wajd* of saints, which creates perfect calm and peace; and *wajd* of prophets, the realization of the highest consciousness.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK5 p.32

Sufis distinguish *wajd* from *wujūd*, both derived from the same root. Commonly translated as ‘being’, *wujūd* can also be rendered as ‘existence’. Sufis call *wujūd*, ‘realized ecstasy’. *Wujūd* is permanent; it cannot be unsettled by any fluctuations, either in the outward conditions of one’s life or by changes in the inward experience of the Divine:

In the beginning, *wajd* is a blazing fire; in the end, it is the transformation of *wajd* into *wujūd*. Otherwise, *wajd* may indicate the opposition between unity (*jamʿ*) and separation (*farq*) because of the fluctuation within contemplative vision.

Shāh Nīʿmat Allāh Valī, Rasāʿil, RNV4 p.179, in SSE1 p.181

Sufis also distinguish *wajd* from *tawājud* (making ecstatic) which is ‘imitative ecstasy’. It is either the attempt to achieve ecstasy by one’s own efforts or the imitative, outward expression of ecstasy by one who is not actually experiencing it.

See also: **wujūd**.

wānanga (Mo) *Lit.* lore, learning, knowledge; Māori tribal lore, ancestral knowledge, sacred knowledge; esoteric knowledge of the hidden mysteries; knowledge or teachings regarded as *tapu* (sacred, restricted); occult lore and knowledge of magic and evil; lore of the *tohunga* (traditional religious, occult, and spiritual expert); a recital or chant concerning the evolution of the universe and the history of man; a genealogical, historical or ritualistic recital (of which *kauwhau* is the more familiar term). *Wānanga* includes lengthy recitals, which include fabulous genealogies and treat of the origin of creation and all phenomena, including man himself, and which were taught in the traditional *whare wānanga* (school of sacred knowledge). A knowledge of these matters is regarded as the highest wisdom known to man – a godlike and god-sent wisdom.

The noun *wānanga* comes from the verb *wānanga* (to meet and discuss, to confer). Hence, *wānanga* also means a conference, a seminar, or a forum. It is also an institution dealing with Māori education. The term is used in this sense in expressions such as *whare wānanga* and *Wānanga o Raukawa*, a centre of higher learning for young Māori, established in 1993 in Ōtaki, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

As the source or embodiment of traditional Māori lore, a *wānanga* is also an instructor of the sacred wisdom, a sacred medium, a sage, a wise person, an expert, a philosopher. *Wānanga* can hence refer to the spirit of anyone who, while living, has learnt the secret incantations of his ancestors. Today all sacred (*tapu*) esoteric wisdom and knowledge, so highly regarded within

the old Māori oral tradition, and those who are the keepers and preservers of the ‘abode’ of this sacred esoteric knowledge are viewed as *te wānanga*, as the source or embodiment of knowledge. Thus, when a disciple of the higher knowledge dies, his abiding spirit can also become a *wānanga*.

During the processes of creation, from the abode of *Io* the supreme Being within *Te Kore* (The Void of Potentiality) emerged *Io-Mata-Kaka* (*Io* the Flashing Countenance) in the seventh heaven. This was followed by *Io-te-Wānanga* (*Io* the Source of all Sacred Knowledge). This higher knowledge became accessible to mankind when the god *Tāne* ascended on the whirlwinds to meet with *Io*, and to bring back the three *kete* (baskets) of knowledge.

Part of an ancient Māori *karakia* (incantation) speaks of how such incantations become “true *wānanga*” – living knowledge:

Most difficult of things that reach us so,
are spells and rites transmitted by the dead,
who had themselves in life through medium weird,
most fully learnt the chants and prayers to grasp;
Transmitted, these became true *wānanga*,
with power to move the living spirit force.
The lowest class of these deal with man’s thoughts of evil.
Then comes knowledge – good and sound – but not the highest.
Now at last is found the third, and formed in it is wisdom true –
relation to the All, of ill and good.

Māori Karakia 3:74–84, AMPK p.49

See also: **tohunga** (7.1).

wāqī’ah, wāqī’ (A/P) (pl. *wāqī’āt, waqā’i’*) *Lit.* occurrence, incident, happening, event; in Sufism, a dream, a vision, an inner experience; a visionary or mystical experience. The term is used in a number of expressions. *Wāqī’ah-’i rūḥānī* (spiritual event), for instance, is a vision of the spirit in which, stripped of its bodily attributes, it rises above the veil of fantasy (the body). *Wāqī’ah-’i rabbānī* (divine event) is a vision of the spirit in which its sight is given the strength of divine light.¹

The term originates in the *Qur’ān*, in a *sūrah* devoted to the coming of the Day of Judgment:

When the inevitable event (*wāqī’ah*) comes to pass –
and no one will then deny its coming –
Some shall be abased and others exalted.

Qur’ān 56:1–3; cf. AYA, KPA

Sufis, however, have invested the term with a mystical meaning. Ibn al-'Arabī says:

Incidents (*waqā'ī'*) come from inside, since they derive from the essence of man. Some people see them in the state of sleep, some in the state of annihilation (*fanā'*), and others in the state of wakefulness.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:491.6, FMIA4 (3:207) p.179, SPK p.404 (n.24)

Likewise, Rūzbihān says:

Gnosis ... springs from an actual experience (*wāqī'ah*) of the Unseen, willed by God to the wayfarer.

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 4:8, MARB p.67; cf. in SSE10 p.33

And Ni'mat Allāh Valī affirms:

Whatever descends to the heart from the realm of the Unseen is an experience (*wāqī'ah*) bringing pleasure, free of all defect.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.28; cf. in SSE7 p.23

Although visions may be experienced in dreams, as in the case of Muḥammad, in the metaphorical terminology of Middle Eastern mysticism (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim), visionary or mystical experiences in full inner consciousness have often been referred to as dreams. Possibly this is because they generally occur during nightly meditation, but also because of the necessity for some obliqueness when referring to mystical experience, in order to avoid the attention and possible censure of the general public.

However such an experience may have come about, there is always the need to know whether the experience was real or was a projection of one's own individual mind (*nafs*), or was a mixture of the two. Sufis have addressed this difficulty:

In the course of immersion in *ẓikr* (remembrance), those in retreat may become oblivious to sensible things, while certain realities of the Unseen become revealed to them, such as a sleeper might experience while dreaming. The *ṣūfīs* call this an event (*wāqī'ah*). Something like this may also occur while one is in a state of presence (*ḥuḏūr*) without one being oblivious to sensible things. In this case, it is called visionary revelation (*mukāshafat*). Events (*wāqī'āt*) that occur during sleep may be either true or false, like conventional dreams, whereas visionary revelation (*mukāshafat*) is never false, for the spirit that is completely detached from all things contemplates the Unseen in total seclusion.

In most events (*waqā'ī*) and dreams, the *naḥs* participates with the spirit, but in some the spirit enjoys the experience alone. Truth is an attribute of the spirit, while falsehood is that of the *naḥs*. Hence, all visionary revelations (*mukāshafāt*) are true, while events (*wāqī'āt*) and dreams may be either true or false.

Maḥmūd Qāshānī, Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah, MHK p.171; cf. in SSE7 pp.23–24

There are two ways in which dream and event (*wāqī'ah*) may be distinguished: by their form and by their spiritual meaning. In terms of form, a dream is experienced in the course of sleep, while an event (*wāqī'ah*) is experienced either in a state between sleep and wakefulness or in a fully awakened state. In terms of spiritual meaning, an event (*wāqī'ah*) is divorced from the realm of imagination, relating purely to the Unseen. It manifests at the station of detachment from human nature, and is absolutely spiritual. It may happen that the spirit's vision is supported by the light of divinity, involving a divine event (*wāqī'ah-i rabbānī*), as indicated in the expression: "The believer sees by God's light."²

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, Mirṣād al-'Ibād, MIMM pp.289–90; cf. in SSE7 p.24

Wāqī'ah is also used in the sense of a difficulty or obstruction, an event that has come in the way of progress. The term is used in Sufism for a persistent thought that arises in the mind, blocking progress. Hujwīrī explains:

Wāqī'ah signifies a thought that appears in the mind and remains there, unlike *khāṭir* (a passing thought), and which the seeker has no means whatever of repelling. Thus, they say, "*khāṭara 'alā qalbī* (a passing thought came into my mind)," but "*waqa'a fī qalbī* (an occurrence fell upon my mind)." All minds are subject to *khāṭir*; but *wāqī'ah* is possible only in a mind that is entirely occupied with God.

Hence, when any obstacle appears to the novice on the way to God, they call it a fetter and say: "A *wāqī'ah* has befallen him." Philologists also use the term *wāqī'ah* to signify any difficult question, and when it is answered satisfactorily they say, "*wāqī'ah ḥall shud* (the problem is solved)." But mystics say that *wāqī'ah* is that which is insoluble, and that whatever can be solved is a *khāṭir*, not a *wāqī'ah*, since the obstacles that confront mystics are not trifles on which changing judgments are continually being formulated.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXIV, KMM pp.502–3; cf. KM pp.387–88

However, a *wāqī'ah* of this nature need not always be an obstruction. It can be more of a positive and lasting state of visionary consciousness:

An event (*wāqī'ah*) is that which enters the heart and becomes fixed until another displaces it. It has three forms: visionary revelation (*kashf*), address (*khiṭāb*) and vision (*ru'yat*) of the Unseen that is shaped by personal and direct insights.

Rūzbiḥān, Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyāt 368:1055, CPS p.549; cf. in SSE8 p.41

See also: **khāṭir**.

1. R.A. Nicholson, *Commentary on Maṣnavī* II:224, *MJR7* p.245.
2. *Ḥadīth*, *AMBF* 33, in *MDI* p.205, *MJR7* p.101, 166, in *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyāt* 190:588 p.326.

waqt (A/P) (pl. *awqāt*) *Lit.* time, hour, moment, instant, opportunity; in Sufism, the present moment, the eternal now, the perpetual moment, the eternal moment (*waqt-i dā'im*, *lit.* eternal time),¹ the metaphysical moment, the spiritual moment, the present instant; awareness of divinity in the present moment; thus, immediate experience, the here and now. As Ibn al-ʿArabī says, “We live with the present moment (*waqt*),”² or as in the Sufi sayings, “*Al-ṣūfī ibn al-waqt* (the Sufi is the son of the moment),” and “The present moment (*waqt*) is a cutting sword.”³ A Sufi is also called *abū al-waqt* (father of the moment), and *ṣāḥib al-waqt* (lord of the moment). Hujwīrī explains:

The *shaykhs* have said, “The present moment (*waqt*) is a cutting sword,” because it is characteristic of a sword to cut, and the present moment (*waqt*) cuts the root of the future and the past, and obliterates care of yesterday and tomorrow from the heart.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXIV, KMM p.482; cf. KM p.369

The present moment (*waqt*) is that whereby a man becomes independent of the past and the future, as, for example, when an influence from God descends into his soul and makes his heart collected (*mujtamiʿ*), he has no memory of the past and no thought of that which is yet to come.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXIV, KMM p.480; cf. KM p.367

Rūmī uses the Sufi saying when speaking of instructions given to him by his master to make no delay in writing the *Maṣnavī*:

(He said): “For the sake of our years of companionship,
recount one of those sweet ecstasies,
that earth and heaven may laugh with joy,
that intellect and spirit and eye
may increase a hundredfold.” ...

He said: "Feed me, for I am hungry, and make haste,
 for time (*waqt*) is a cutting sword.
 The *ṣūfī* is the son of the present moment (*waqt*), O comrade:
 it is not the rule of the Way to say 'Tomorrow'.
 Are you not indeed a *ṣūfī*, then?
 That which is in hand is reduced to naught
 by postponing the payment."

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:126–27, 132–34; cf. MJR2 p.11

Waqt is the moment in which time is experienced, slipped between past and future, neither of which exist. The past lies only in memory, the future in imagination. For any creature living in time, only the present moment is real. For the spiritual seeker, each moment provides the opportunity to turn towards God or towards the world and his own self. To the seeker, a lapse in awareness of the Divine is a moment lost forever. Junayd said, "The moment (*waqt*) is precious: once it passes, it can never be recaptured."⁴ Other Sufis have said much the same:

Your moment (*waqt*) is between two breaths, one of them past and the other yet to come. . . . Yesterday has happened; when is tomorrow? The day is today. The moment (*al-waqt*) is a keen-edged sword.

Abū Sa'īd al-Khayr, Asrār al-Tawhīd, ATS1 p.285, in SSE8 p.104

I heard the master, Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq, say: "The moment (*waqt*) is where you are. If you are in the world, then your moment (*waqt*) is the world. If you are in the next world (*'uqbā*), your moment (*waqt*) is the next world (*'uqbā*). If you are in happiness, your moment (*waqt*) is happiness. If you are in sadness, your moment (*waqt*) is sadness." By this he means that the moment (*waqt*) is that which dominates a person at the time.

Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ p.33; cf. in EIM p.100, in SSE8 p.106

Be present in your *waqt*, so that whatever you may experience comes through God's control and not your own efforts. If you are successful in this you will experience contentment with God, and in being subject to the moment (*waqt*) nothing but God will enter your mind. If, while in this state, you wish to acquire something, you may choose that which is most important to you.

Let past and future go, do not lose your *waqt*, for consciousness of the past spoils the present moment (*waqt*) and thinking of the future causes it to pass. Hence, it has been said that the *ṣūfī* is the son of the moment (*ibn al-waqt*).

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 pp.34–35, in SSE8 pp.104–5

Being a “son of the moment” refers to a state of relaxed vigilance, alertness and inner discipline, of being entirely and fully concentrated in the moment. This attitude also makes the seeker instantly responsive to the divine will, inwardly surrendering to all that is sent his way. He lives in the present moment, rather than among his baggage from the past or his desires and expectations of the future. This is different, however, from one who is blown away by the content of the moment, who changes like a chameleon with every change of circumstance. The one is focused, the other scattered; the one is aware of the divine presence, the other unaware.

Being the experience of the present moment, *waqt* is sometimes used by Sufis almost synonymously with *ḥāl* (state), the spiritual state in which a seeker finds himself and which is dominant at any moment. In fact, *waqt* (or *waqtī*) is sometimes translated as ‘state’. The two terms are closely inter-related, as Hujwīrī explains:

Ḥāl (state) is that which descends upon the moment (*waqt*) and adorns it, as the spirit adorns the body. The moment (*waqt*) has need of *ḥāl*, for the moment (*waqt*) is made beautiful by *ḥāl* and subsists thereby. When the owner of *waqt* comes into possession of *ḥāl*, he is no longer subject to change and is made steadfast (*mustaqīm*) in his state (*ḥāl*).

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXIV, KMM p.482; cf. KM p.369

See also: **ibn al-waqt** (►4).

1. Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 102, *GSTA* p.33.
2. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 2:605.14, *FMIA*4 (278) p.351, *SPK* p.243.
3. E.g. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:132, *MJR*2 p.11.
4. Junayd, in *Luma’ fī al-Taṣawwuf*, *KLTA* p.342, in *SSE*8 p.104.

wārid (A/P) (pl. *wāridāt*) *Lit.* inrush, oncoming, influence, influx, inspiration, visitation, event; in Sufism, a spontaneous and unexpected inflowing of spiritual inspiration, divine grace and mystical revelation into the heart.

Shaykh ibn ‘Ajibah, commenting on a poem by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh, defines *wārid* as: “a divine light that God casts into the heart of the one He loves among His servants”. A *wārid* can, he says, occur at the outset of the spiritual journey, in the midst of the journey, or when union with the Divine has taken place.¹

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh himself says that God sends an inspiration in order to encourage the soul to come to Him:

He only made an inspiration (*wārid*) come upon you
so that you might go to Him.

He made an inspiration (*wārid*) come upon you
 so as to get you out of the grip of opposites,
 and free you from bondage to created things.
 He made an inspiration (*wārid*) come upon you,
 so as to take you out of the prison of your existence
 into the unlimited space of your contemplation.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, Kitāb al-Ḥikam 6:52–54, HAAI p.55; cf. BWIC pp.60–61

He also makes a common wordplay on *wird* (litany, recitation, repetition) and *wārid*. Internal, mental *wird* is a part of spiritual practice. Its intention is to focus and concentrate the mind so that it becomes receptive to the divine influence. It is practised with the human part of the mind, which is left behind in this world. Nevertheless, it is the means by which a human being begins the ascent to the Divine. It is a part of the spiritual effort expected of a human being. *Wārid*, on the other hand, being the inflow of divine grace into the soul, continues after the soul has left this world. *Wārid* is experienced according to the divine will:

Inspiration (*wārid*) is to be found in the hereafter:
 litany (*wird*) vanishes with the vanishing of this world...
 The litany (*wird*) is what He seeks from you:
 inspiration (*wārid*) is what you seek from Him.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, Kitāb al-Ḥikam 12:112, HAAI pp.64–65; cf. BWIC p.75

Describing the experience of *wāridāt*, Sa'dī writes that when the inner door opens, the soul lets go of the world:

Through inspirations (*wāridāt*), a door opens in his heart,
 he waves his arms at (*i.e.* abandons) the world.

Sa'dī, Bustān 3:310, KSSS p.121; cf. BSS p.206

Other Sufis such as Ibn al-ʿArabī and his school have been more analytical in their definition of the term, where it is one of a number used in the description of mystical experiences. Such terms include *dhawq* (tasting), *fath* or *futūḥ* (opening, revelation), *kashf* (unveiling), *shurb* (drinking), *rī* (quenching), *sukr* (intoxication), *baṣīrah* (insight), and *shuhūd* or *mushāhadah* (witnessing). These terms express various degrees of experience that may arise as a result of divine *wāridāt* (inspirations).

According to al-Qushayrī, *wāridāt* can be any sudden influx of feeling that arises independently of a person's intention. He defines a *wāridāt* as praiseworthy or positive *khawāṭir* (incoming thoughts). This can include shame or guilt, and so on, as well as – more generally – divine inspirations or influxes. The influx of such feelings naturally modifies any existing state

of consciousness. Some influxes, such as guilt, may overwhelm the heart, causing constriction. Others, such as intimations of divine grace, cause expansion, permitting room for a greater inflow of grace. Sometimes, says al-Qushayrī, a divine inspiration may fill a person so completely that there is no room for more.²

Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the effect of a *wārid* on different people. Some are temporarily overwhelmed, unable to function normally in the outer world while the experience lasts. Some become permanently lost in the inner intoxication, becoming *ʿuqalāʾ al-majānīn* (rational madmen). For others, the state does not last long, and they soon return to normality. Much depends on the individual's spiritual capacity:

Sometimes, the person's inrush (*wārid*) and revelation are equal to his own capacity. No one sees any effect of the ruling property of the inrush (*wārid*) over him, but one becomes aware upon seeing him, through a hidden kind of awareness, that something has happened to him, since he has to listen to the inrush (*wārid*) in order to take what it has brought him from the Real.

His state is like that of a seated companion who is conversing with you, when another person comes with a command for him from the king. He stops talking to you, and listens to what that person is saying. Once he receives the message, he returns to the conversation. In such a case, even if you do not see anything with your eyes, you notice that something has distracted him from you, as if someone were speaking to him. Or he has suddenly begun to think about something, so his senses turn toward it in his imagination, and his eyes and his gaze become dull, even while you are talking to him. You look at him, but your words do not register with him, so you become aware that his inward dimension is thinking about something else, different from what you are busy with.

Sometimes the person's capacity is greater than the inrush (*wārid*), so when it comes to him – while he is conversing with you – you do not become aware. He takes what the inrush (*wārid*) casts to him, and he takes from you what you say to him, or he speaks to you.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 1:248.27, FMIA1 (1:44) p.376; cf. SPK p.267

See also: *ʿuqalāʾ al-majānīn* (7.1), *wird* (8.4),

1. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Illāh, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* 6:55, BWIC p.137 (n.42).
2. Al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, RQQQ pp.35–36, in EIM pp.105–8.

waṣl, wiṣāl (A/P) *Lit.* union, joining; to be united in friendship, for instance; in Sufism, union with God, leaving behind ‘me’ and ‘mine’; from the verb *waṣala* (to arrive, to be united); hence, the seeker’s arrival at the station of true unity, having abandoned all sense of individuality:

Union (*waṣl*) is forgetting yourself in the vision of the light of the being of God.

Khawājā ‘Ubayd Allāh, in Nafahāt al-Uns, NUJ p.412, in SSE12 p.117

Every part of one’s being is absorbed in God:

Union (*waṣl*) is said to mean that one is not, even for a moment, separated from God; the tongue is occupied in remembrance, the heart in reflection, and the soul in the contemplation of God, being with Him in all states. The one in union (*wāṣil*) is said to be one who is liberated from himself and joined with God, becoming characterized by His qualities and devoid of any trace of personal identity, like a drop vanishing into the sea.

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.361; cf. in SSE2 p.51

Waṣl and the related terms *wuṣūl*, *wiṣāl*, *wāṣil* and *wuṣlat* or *waṣlat* are all derived from the root *w-s-l*. *Waṣl* is a verbal noun meaning union or juncture. *Wuṣūl* is another verbal noun with the connotation of arrival or attainment of the divine. *Wiṣāl* implies conjunction, communion with a sense that the two parties have yet to be united. *Wuṣlat* or *waṣlat* has a sense of action, of the two coming together in union. *Wāṣil* is the united one, the one experiencing union.¹

Tahānawī explains:

Wuṣūl signifies the ultimate nearness to God. . . . *Wuṣūl* and secondary union (*wiṣāl*) signify the station of unity, while the primary union (*waṣl*) signifies true unity. . . .

Some maintain that primary union (*waṣl*) signifies the wayfarer’s annihilation in the divine Attributes, while the lowest level of secondary union (*wiṣāl*) is the witnessing of God and reflects the wayfarer’s thoughts of duality and his separation from the unreal, determined (created) forms and existence.

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIF p.1506, in FNI12 pp.290–91; cf. in SSE12 p.113

Ni‘mat Allāh Valī speaks of the superlative, *waṣl-i waṣl*, which he says refers to the union after descent into the material world:

The union of union (*waṣl-i waṣl*) involves return after departure and ascent after descent, for we have all descended from the higher levels which represent the essence of concentratedness (*jam'iyat*). This is the absolute union (*waṣl-i muṭlaq*) in pre-eternity, from which we have fallen to the lowest level, which is that of the realm of the differentiated elements (of this world).

Some of us have dwelt at the lowest depths, then plunging even deeper to the very bottom; while others have returned to the path of journeying to and in God, graced with God's Attributes and annihilated in His Essence, until attaining true union (*waṣl-i ḥaqīqī*) and dwelling there in post-eternity, just as we had been in pre-eternity.

Shāh Nūrmat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.33; cf. in SSE12 p.120

Ibn al-'Arabī looks at the coin from the other side. From God's point of view, He is never separate from His creation:

The Real is perpetually in a state of union (*waṣl*) with created existence. Through this, He is a god. This is indicated by His words, "He is with you wherever you may be."²

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:480.12, FMIA4 (3:200) p.163; cf. SPK p.365

Union (*waṣl*) implies complete annihilation (*fanā'*) of the ego. The Sufi poets have spoken of this in a variety of ways. Sa'dī says that he is unconcerned about the "Day of Judgment" for he has already experienced "death" through the pangs of "separation" and the annihilation of the ego, and "resurrection" to eternal life through "union (*waṣl*)" with Him:

It may be that I shall not be
called to account on the Day of Judgment:
Since I have experienced union (*waṣl*) with You,
and separation from You,
what occasion is there for death or resurrection? ...
The street of union (*waṣl*) with the Beloved is not a market
in which one's life (ego) has any value.

Sa'dī, Ṭayyibāt 90:3, 96:9, KSSS pp.263–64, TOS pp.127, 135

Not every soul, however, will have the good fortune to experience union in this life:

Everyone seeks to taste the food of union (*waṣl*),
but who will have the fortune to sit at the table?

Kamāl Khujandī, Dīvān, DKK p.241, in SSE2 p.50

Even so, where there is life, there is hope:

I draw life from the hope of union (*wiṣāl*) with You:
otherwise how could I bear separation?

‘Irāqī, Kullīyāt 2073, KHI p.176, in SSE2 p.50

Nevertheless, the truth is that union is a divine gift that does not come simply by seeking it:

How may I seek union (*waṣl*) with You,
when it does not come through seeking?

How may I describe You,
when speech comes not to my tongue?

‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān 163:3417, DASN p.186, in SSE2 p.51

Ibn al-Fāriḍ indicates that union involves spiritual ascent:

My spirit passed the gate
that barred my going beyond union (*ittiṣāl*),
and soared to where no barrier to union (*wiṣāl*) remained. . . .

He who, like me, makes this gate his chosen quest,
let him follow me and ride with firm resolution!

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā’īyah 441–42, DFQM p.87; cf. in SIM pp.237–38

He also says that he has little to offer in exchange for the great gift of union:

It seems to me that my spirit is not worth so much
that it should be offered in exchange for union (*wiṣāl*) with You,
for it is too threadbare to be prized.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā’īyah 110, DFQM p.56; cf. in SIM p.211

In the opening verses to his *Maṣnavī*, Rūmī says that souls separated from their divine Source are automatically in quest of It:

Whoever is separated from his source
longs for the time of union (*waṣl*) with it.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:4

And when that union is attained and the pangs of separation are over, Ḥāfiẓ suggests:

Proper gratitude for the unveiling of the day of union (*wiṣāl*)
is to forget the complaint of the night of separation.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.164, DIH p.283, in SSE2 p.50

1. See Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism*, SSE12 p.113.
2. *Qur'ān* 57:4; cf. AYA.

watchfulness (Gk. *nēpsis*) In a spiritual context, alertness, attentiveness, vigilance, mindfulness; keeping a constant watch on what one is thinking, doing, and saying; guarding the heart from impure thoughts and negativity; in spiritual contexts, used more or less synonymously with vigilance.

Spiritual teachers have taught the need for watchfulness since ancient times. As one of the biblical psalms begins:

I will watch how I behave,
and not let my tongue lead me into sin;
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked man is near me.

Psalms 39:1, JB

Or as the unknown writer of the New Testament epistle, *1 Peter*, advises:

Be watchful (*nēphō*), be vigilant (*grēgoreō*); for your adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8; cf. KJV

Quoting this verse, Hēsychios the Priest adds:

So you must never relax your attentiveness of heart, your watchfulness (*nēpsis*), your power of rebuttal, or your prayer to Jesus Christ our God.

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 39, Philokalia, PCTI p.169

Watchfulness is fundamental to the contemplative life, and several of the Orthodox fathers have written on the subject in the *Philokalia*. Hēsychios, especially, has much to say. Here, the “three aspects of our soul” are the Platonic *epithymētikōn* (desire, desire for gain), *thymos* (incensive power, passion), and *nous* (understanding, spirit, soul):¹

Watchfulness (*nēpsis*) is a spiritual method, which, if sedulously practised over a long period, completely frees us with God’s help from impassioned thoughts, impassioned words, and evil actions. It leads, insofar as this is possible, to a sure knowledge of the inapprehensible God, and helps us to penetrate the divine and hidden mysteries.... It is, in the true sense, purity of heart, a state ... which, because of its spiritual nobility and beauty – or, rather, because of our negligence – is now extremely rare among monks.

Because this is its nature, watchfulness (*nēpsis*) is to be bought only at a great price. But once established in us, it guides us to a true and holy way of life. It teaches us how to activate the three aspects of our soul correctly, and how to keep a firm guard over the senses. It promotes the daily growth of the four principal virtues (justice, fortitude, prudence, temperance), and is the basis of our contemplation.

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 1, Philokalia, PCT1 p.162

Inner prayer and watchfulness support each other, and are a part of the same process:

Combine prayer with inner watchfulness (*nēpsis*), for watchfulness (*nēpsis*) purifies prayer, while prayer purifies watchfulness (*nēpsis*). It is through unceasing watchfulness (*nēpsis*) that we can perceive what is entering into us, and can to some extent close the door against it.

Philotheos of Sinai, On Watchfulness 25, Philokalia, PCT3 p.26

Watchfulness is part of the way to attain stillness of the mind:

Watchfulness (*nēpsis*) is a way of embracing every virtue, every commandment. It is the heart's stillness and, when free from mental images, it is the guardian of the mind (*nous*).

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 2–3, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 pp.162–63

Hēsychios identifies four types of watchfulness:

One type of watchfulness (*nēpsis*) consists in closely scrutinizing every mental image or provocation; for only by means of a mental image can Satan fabricate an evil thought and insinuate this into the intellect in order to lead it astray.

A second type of watchfulness (*nēpsis*) consists in freeing the heart from all thoughts, keeping it profoundly silent and still, and in praying.

A third type consists in continually and humbly calling upon the Lord Jesus for help.

A fourth type is always to have the thought of death in one's mind.

These types of watchfulness (*nēpsis*), my child, act like doorkeepers and bar entry to evil thoughts.

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 14–18, Philokalia, PCT1 pp.164–65

St Teresa counsels continuous watchfulness, because even after enjoying a state of divine grace in prayer, the mind is still assailed by a great many minor temptations:

We must always be watchful, and pay heed to both our outward and our inward behaviour. I assure you that, although the Lord may grant you favours in prayer and bestow upon you what I will describe later, nevertheless, once you emerge from such favoured states, you will find a thousand little occasions of stumbling and a thousand little temptations. Now you will come to grief because of your unwatchfulness, now because of leaving something undone; and you will have interior disturbances and temptations.

Teresa of Ávila, On the Song of Songs 2, CWTA2 pp.365–66

See also: **attentiveness**.

1. Hēsychios the Priest, *On Watchfulness* 126, *Philokalia*, PCTI p.184.

wiṣāl (A/P) See **waṣl**.

wisdom (Gk. *sophia*, He. *hokhmah*) The ability to think and act on the basis of experience, knowledge, good judgment, common sense, and insight; worldly wisdom, spiritual wisdom, heavenly wisdom; also, a body of mystical doctrine, such as the ancient wisdom or Oriental wisdom; spiritually, an awareness of the presence of God that has led to a clear inner understanding of the workings both of the creation and human nature; a distinctive characteristic of the true saint or mystic sage; sometimes identified as the first of the four cardinal virtues, normally known as prudence; *gnōsis* (Gk), mystical insight; the goal of philosophy, being the spiritual path to God, as understood by the ancient Greeks; hence the wisdom of God – the supreme intelligence and consciousness of the Divine, who orders all things with wisdom. In a world whose primal causes remain essentially hidden, the unbounded, uncreated and eternal wisdom of God is commonly invoked as a catch-all explanation of the inexplicable events of life, including suffering and the seemingly unfair.

Wisdom is also the divine creative power, God being the source of the wisdom and intelligence that underlies creation. In Hebrew and Greek, the terms used are *Hokhmah* and *Sophia*. “Before all other things, Wisdom (*sophia*) was created,”¹ writes Jesus ben Sirach, echoing *Proverbs*:

Yahweh created me (Wisdom)
 when his purpose first unfolded,
 before the oldest of his works.
 From everlasting I was firmly set,
 from the beginning,
 before the earth came into being.

Proverbs 8:22–23, JB

Both are again echoed in the opening lines of John's gospel ("In the beginning was the Word," *etc.*).

In classical times, the highest wisdom was understood to be essentially spiritual in nature. During the trial of Socratēs, charged with introducing new divinities and corrupting the Athenian youth, he explains how he had come to be so vilified in certain quarters. The oracle of the god Apollo at Delphi, he recalls, had been asked whether there was anyone wiser than Socratēs, "and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser". Socratēs continues:

Why do I mention this? Because I want to explain to you how the attack on my reputation first started. When I heard the oracle's answer, I said to myself, what can the god mean, and what is his hidden meaning? For I know that I am not wise (*sophos*), either by little or much. What then can he mean by asserting that I am the wisest of men? For he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long perplexity, I thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. Then I should say to him, "You said that I was the wisest of men, but here is a man who is wiser than I."

Accordingly, I went to one who had the reputation of being wise (*sophos*), and observed him – his name I need not mention, he was a politician; and in the process of examining and talking with him, this, men of Athens, was what I found. I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself. Thereupon I tried to explain to him that he only thought himself to be wise, but was not really wise. And the consequence was that my efforts were resented both by him and several others who were present.

So I reflected as I walked away, "Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really worth knowing, I am at least wiser than this fellow – for he knows nothing and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this one little point, then, I seem to have the advantage of him." Then I went to another who was reputed to be wiser than he, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I incurred his resentment, and of many others besides him.

Plato, Apology 21b–e; cf. CDP pp.7–8, DP1 p.345

Socratēs then explains how he felt obliged to continue his examination of the wisest men of Athens, since the business of the god came first. And he found that those "with the greatest reputations were almost entirely deficient, while others who were supposed to be their inferiors were much more noteworthy for their general good sense". Having done the round of the politicians, he then turned to the poets and playwrights. Expecting to be exposed as a

“comparative ignoramus”, he found that “many of the audience could have explained those poems better than they did themselves”. And he concluded that “not by wisdom (*sophia*) do poets write poetry,” but that they write by a kind of inspiration, “like diviners or soothsayers”, without ever really understanding what they were putting down on paper. After this, he turned to the skilled craftsmen, only to find a situation similar to that of the poets.² Unsurprisingly, in the process of his research, Socratēs made more than a few enemies. Finally, he concludes:

The truth of the matter, O men of Athens, is this: that only God is wise, and this oracle is His way of telling us that human wisdom (*sophia*) has little or no value. It seems to me that He is not referring literally to Socratēs, but has merely taken my name by way of illustration, as if to say, “O men, the wisest of you is he who has realized, like Socratēs, that his wisdom (*sophia*) is actually worthless.”

Plato, Apology 23a–b; cf. CDP p.9, DP1 p.347

In *Phaedo*, where he is among his friends and followers, and about to face execution for his ‘crimes’, Socratēs is more explicit as to the actual nature of wisdom. Here, wisdom is depicted as the fruit of the soul’s quest to realize herself as a spiritual being – apart from the body and the physical senses – and to find God. This is true philosophy (*philosophia*). Thus, the “wisdom (*phronēsis*) which we desire” is known only to “the soul by itself”, to achieve which “we must get rid of the body”.³ Wisdom is when the soul, through contemplation, escapes from the body and her wanderings in the transient world, and enters the unchanging world of immortality. The body and its senses are actually a hindrance to the development of the highest wisdom:

The soul when using the body as an instrument of perception – that is to say, when using the senses of sight or hearing or some other sense ... – is then drawn by the body into the realm of the transient, and loses her way, confused and dizzy like a drunken man. ...

When she contemplates (*skopeō*) with focused, one-pointed attention (within herself), then she passes into the other world, the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and changelessness, which are her kindred, and with whom she lives forever, free and independent. Then she ceases her wandering, and remains in that realm of the Absolute, unchanging and invariable. ... And this condition of the soul is called wisdom (*phronēsis*).

Plato, Phaedo 79c–d; cf. CDP p.63, DP1 pp.433–34

In antiquity, wisdom was classified into two categories: practical wisdom and philosophic or contemplative wisdom. Mystics such as Plotinus give

contemplative wisdom a higher place than did rationalists such as Aristotle, but both are agreed that practical wisdom is the wisdom of this world, including craftsmen's skills. To Aristotle, philosophic wisdom is concerned with matters of a speculative or theoretical nature, while to Plotinus philosophic wisdom is the non-conceptual understanding of the soul that arises from contemplation. Interestingly, the term *theōria* can mean both speculation and contemplation, and translations such as 'theoretical wisdom' may actually be referring to contemplative wisdom, not to the fruits of intellectual cogitation. Spiritual or contemplative wisdom is of an altogether higher nature than mere reasoning.⁴ As Heraclitus puts it, in his thought-provoking manner:

Wisdom (*sophia*) is one: to understand the Intelligence by which all things are governed (by Its presence) in all things.

Heraclitus, Fragment 120 (41)

Plotinus asks himself the basic question: what is the source of wisdom? What is its fundamental nature? He replies that wisdom is inherent in the very nature of spiritual life or being; it is a part of God Himself. If, then, wisdom is a part of the Divine, then God Himself must be pure wisdom:

Pure life is never a burden; how then could there be weariness there (in the spiritual realms), where the living is most pure? That life is wisdom (*sophia*), wisdom (*sophia*) not acquired by reasoning, for it was always present, without any failing that would require it to be sought. It is primal, not derived from any other wisdom (*sophia*); it does not exist first, and then become wise. For this reason there is no greater wisdom. . . .

This is no wisdom (*sophia*) built on theorems, but one totality, not a wisdom (*sophia*) consisting of manifold detail co-ordinated into a unity, but rather a Unity manifesting in detail. . . . Now, if we could think of this as the primal wisdom (*sophia*), we need look no further, since in that we have discovered a Principle, which is not a derivative but something fundamental and inherent.

Plotinus, Enneads 5:8.4–5; cf. PA5 pp.250–55, PEC pp.241–42

Plotinus is speaking of the wisdom that is an integral part of the Divine.

Wisdom literature, consisting of wise and pithy sayings concerning human wisdom, especially of a spiritual nature, was a distinct genre in the ancient world. The biblical Wisdom Literature takes this to a high level, having much to say on Wisdom as the divine creative power as well as worldly and spiritual wisdom. A great deal of what is said in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Proverbs* and the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, for example, concerns Wisdom as the creative power, but often this also spills over into

spiritual wisdom, since human wisdom is the divine Wisdom reflected in human consciousness. Thus, after extolling Wisdom as the creative power, *Proverbs* continues:

I, Wisdom (*Ḥokhmah*), am mistress of discretion,
 the inventor of lucidity of thought.
 Good advice and sound judgment belong to me,
 perception to me, strength to me. . . .
 I hate pride and arrogance,
 wicked behaviour and a lying mouth.
 I love those who love me:
 those who seek me eagerly shall find me.
 By me monarchs rule,
 and princes issue just laws;
 By me rulers govern,
 and the great impose justice on the world.
 With me are riches and honour,
 lasting wealth and justice.
 The fruit I give is better than gold, even the finest,
 the return I make is better than pure silver.
 I walk in the way of virtue,
 in the paths of justice,
 enriching those who love me,
 filling their treasuries.

Proverbs 8:12–21, JB

In accordance with the style of ancient wisdom texts, *Proverbs* is replete with maxims, including an oft-quoted saying, where “fear of *Yahweh*” applies to reverence and devotion rather than to fright:

The fear of *Yahweh* is the beginning of wisdom (*ḥokhmah*),
 the knowledge of the Holy One – perception indeed! . . .
 On the lips of a discerning man is wisdom (*ḥokhmah*) found,
 on the back of a fool, the stick. . . .
 The mouth of the virtuous man utters wisdom (*ḥokhmah*),
 the deceitful tongue shall be torn out. . . .
 Pride comes first, disgrace comes after;
 with the humble is wisdom (*ḥokhmah*) found.

Proverbs 9:10, 10:13, 31, 11:2, JB

Spiritual wisdom is often contrasted with worldly wisdom. The writer of *Ecclesiastes* (pseudonymously adopting the persona of Solomon, traditionally regarded as the archetype of wisdom) begins by explaining that although

he had acquired a vast stock of this world's wisdom, he has finally come to realize that it is all of no account:

I thought to myself, "I have acquired a greater stock of wisdom (*hokhmah*) than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem. I have great experience of wisdom (*hokhmah*) and learning." Wisdom (*hokhmah*) has been my careful study; stupidity, too, and folly. And now I have come to recognize that even this is chasing of the wind.

Much wisdom (*hokhmah*), much grief,
the more knowledge, the more sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 1:16–18, JB

Going on to speak of a more spiritual wisdom, he adds the maxims:

Wisdom (*hokhmah*) lends more strength to the wise
than ten rulers in a city. . . .
Better wisdom (*hokhmah*) than warlike weapons,
but one mistake undoes a deal of good.

Ecclesiastes 7:19, 9:18, JB

Wisdom is often understood as arising from long experience. Hence, Jesus ben Sirach considers the virtues of wisdom in the aged:

If you have gathered nothing in your youth,
how can you find anything in your old age?
How fine a thing: sound judgment with grey hairs,
and for greybeards to know how to advise!
How fine a thing; wisdom (*sophia*) in the aged,
and considered advice coming from men of distinction!
The crown of old men is ripe experience,
their true glory, the fear of the Lord.

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 25:3–6, JB

Wisdom is commonly mentioned in Christian writings, where it is related both to Wisdom as the creative power and to God, who is said to be all wisdom, all love, and all power. Mystical wisdom arises from the practice of spiritual contemplation:

The fruit of this exercise is high spiritual wisdom, which suddenly and spontaneously bursts up from the deepest inner ground of the spirit itself. It is a wisdom, dark and formless, far removed from all the fantasies of reason or imagination. No straining or toiling of the

natural faculties will be able to produce its like. Whatever they may produce, be it ever so sublime or subtle, when compared to this wisdom, is little more than an illusory dream and foolish imagining. It is as distant from the real truth, perceived in the radiance of the spiritual sun, as the darkness of moonbeams piercing the night mists in the middle of winter is distinct from fine bright sunlight at the height of a midsummer day.

Book of Privy Counselling 5; cf. CUCW pp.172–73, LPD p.36

Humanly, wisdom is an understanding of the transient nature of material existence:

Nothing in this world is lasting, and everything in this life is uncertain, troubling to the spirit. How wise is the man who knows these truths! Grant me heavenly wisdom, O Lord, that above all else I may learn to search for and discover You; to know and love You; and to see all things as they really are, and as You in Your wisdom have ordered them. May I prudently avoid those who flatter me, and deal patiently with those who oppose me. True wisdom cannot be swayed by every wordy argument, and pays no regard to the cunning flatteries of evil men. Only thus shall we go forward steadily on the road on which we have set out. . . .

True heavenly wisdom, having no exalted opinion of itself, seeks no recognition from the world, is almost disregarded by men, and seems to them useless and of no importance. Many pay it lip service, but it plays no part in their lives. Yet this is the precious pearl, that remains hidden from many.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 3:27, 32, ICTK pp.131, 138

Wisdom is also surrender to the divine will, and acceptance of whatever happens:

The wisdom of the pure in heart is to be contented with their lot, to keep on their way, and never to overreach themselves. They are not curious about how God operates. They accept without question what He ordains for them, waiting only for each moment to reveal God's word, happy and contented in the knowledge that He speaks to the heart. They are not concerned about what He is saying to them or to others. So that from one moment to the next, however little and in whatever way, they are receiving His grace without realizing it.

J.-P. de Caussade, Sacrament of the Present Moment 9, SPM p.96

See also: **philosophy** (►4), **sage** (7.1), **Wisdom** (3.1).

1. *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach* 1:4, *JB*.
2. Plato, *Apology* 22a–d; cf. *CDP* pp.8–9, *DPI* p.346.
3. Plato, *Phaedo* 66d–e, *CDP* p.49.
4. E.g. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6:3, 5–13; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:2.1, 7, 1:3.6, *passim*.

wujūd (A/P) *Lit.* existence, being; also, finding, discovering, experiencing, experience; also, ecstatic existence, ecstatic being. *Wujūd* is used for the Absolute Being, for realms and states of being lower than the Absolute, and also as a term for the ecstasy of divine revelation. Because of its spread of meaning, the term is impossible to translate into just one word in English, and the choice of words depends on the context.

Many Arabic words are based upon a three-consonant root, in this case *w-j-d*. The many permutations of vowels, prefixes and suffixes applied to the root then provide a family of related words. To a native Arabic speaker, the meaning is generally clear from the way in which these words are constructed. Other Sufi terms in this family include *wajd* (ecstasy, finding), *tawājud* (imitative ecstasy), and the verb *wajada* (to discover, to experience, to obtain, to feel intensely). The three underlying meanings present in all these words are finding, experiencing, and ecstasy.

In the sense of ecstatic being, *wujūd* is used for the stable state of permanent ecstasy following the fluctuations of *wajd* (ecstasy):

Junayd said, “The *wujūd* (finding, experience, ecstasy, existence) of the Real occurs though the loss of self.” ... It takes place after rising beyond *wajd*. (For the servant of God), ecstatic experience (*wujūd*) of the Real only takes place when human nature (*basharīyah*) has been overcome. Human nature cannot withstand the appearance of the sovereignty of the Real.

In this regard, Abū al-Ḥusayn Nūrī said: “For twenty years I was between *wajd* (ecstasy/finding) and *faqd* (loss). When I found my Lord, I lost my heart; and when I found my heart, I lost my Lord.”

In the same regard, Junayd said: “His knowledge of oneness (*tawḥīd*) is distinct from his *wujūd*, and his *wujūd* is distinct from his knowledge.” ...

Tawājud (imitative ecstasy) is a beginning and *wujūd* is an end, and ecstasy (*wajd*) is an intermediary between the beginning and the end.

I heard the master, Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq say: “*Tawājud* entails the encompassing of the servant. Ecstasy (*wajd*) entails the immersion of the servant. *Wujūd* entails the extinction of the servant. It is like one who witnesses the sea, then sails upon the sea, then drowns in the sea.

The order of the matter is: quest, then witnessing, then *wujūd*, then *khumūd* (extinction).”

Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ pp.43, 37; cf. in EIM pp.131, 113–14

Others confirm that *wujūd*, or experience of it, entails complete annihilation of the individual self:

Wujūd signifies the devotee’s loss of self through the disappearance of human qualities, so that only God’s being remains. This is because all human qualities vanish away before the appearance of the *Sulṭān* of Reality.

Jurjānī, Ta’rīfāt, KTJ p.226, in SSE1 p.185

See also: **shuhūd, tawājjud, wajd.**

wǔshí qīhòu (C) *Lit.* five (*wǔ*) periods (*shí*) and seven (*qī*) seasons (*hòu*); the five phases (*wǔshí*) of the mind and the seven stages (*qīhòu*) of the body experienced by a Daoist practitioner as he progresses in meditation, from the early stages through to mystical ascent and union with the *Dào*; a schema introduced by the eminent physician of Traditional Chinese Medicine, master Sūn Sīmiǎo (C7th), in his *Cúnshén liànzì míng* (‘Inscription on the Visualization of Spirit and Refinement of Life Energy’). Sūn Sīmiǎo’s treatise was a precursor to other Daoist mystical texts, notably master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn’s (C8th) *Zuòwàng lùn* (‘Discourse on Sitting in Forgetfulness’), which also describes seven steps towards the *Dào*.

Master Sūn Sīmiǎo first explains that some initial practices are required before commencing the inner journey. Designed to calm the mind, these exercises involve refining the body’s vital essence (*jīng*) and life energy (*qì*). *Qì* and *jīng* are fundamental concepts in Daoist philosophy:

If you ... wish to calm the spirit (*shén*), first refine the primordial Energy (*yuánqì*). When this energy (*qì*) dwells within the body, the spirit is calm and energy is like an ocean. With the ocean of energy full to overflowing, the mind is calm and the spirit is peaceful and still (*āndìng*). When this stillness (*dìng*) is not scattered, body and mind come together in tranquillity. When tranquillity becomes absolute stillness, then immortality is attained.

Remain constantly present and still at the source of the *Dào*, and you will automatically become a sage (*shèng*). Then energy (*qì*) will pervade spirit and its many created projections, and spirit will pervade all wisdom (*huì*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). With your (spiritual) life (*mìng*) and your embodiment preserved, you will be one with your

true nature (*zhēnxìng*). You will be as old as the sun and moon! Then your path (*dào*) will be complete!

To achieve the ultimate *Dào*, you must learn the technique of refining your energy as described. For this, first abstain from eating all grains (*i.e.* minimize and simplify your diet). Then focus your mind calmly on the ocean of energy (*qìhǎi*); visualize the spirit in the cinnabar field (*dāntián*, centre of *qì*); gather in your mind, and make your thoughts tranquil. When the ocean of energy is full, you will naturally feel fulfilled (*bǎo*) at all times.

Cultivate mental one-pointedness in this manner. One hundred days (*i.e.* a short period of practice) will lead to a minor achievement; three hundred days (*i.e.* longer, sustained effort) will bring you to a higher level. Only after this can you enter the five phases (*wǔshí*) of the mind, and only after these have been completed can you undergo the seven stages (*qīhòu*) of the body.

Then you will be nothing but pure spirit and spiritual power, always adaptable, and living naturally throughout all the business of the world. Whether confronting a steep cliff or a journey of a thousand miles, you will come and go without hindrance (*i.e.* be beyond physical limitation).

As long as energy is not scattered, your ocean of energy will always be full, your spirit will be at peace in the cinnabar field, and your body and mind will be continually firm (*gù*). . . . Then you can appear and disappear from the mundane world at will, passing freely by means of the all-pervading spiritual power. You will be called ‘one gone beyond the world’ or a ‘realized one (*zhēnrén*)’

This method does not require that you live on energy (*qì*), swallow saliva, or undergo any particular hardship (*i.e.* austerities). Eat when you need to eat; rest when you need to rest. . . .

Then, passing through the five phases (*wǔshí*) of the mind and the seven stages (*qīhòu*) of the body, you will duly enter the essence of the *Dào*, using deeper methods of concentration and contemplation.

Sūn Sīmǎo, Cúnshén liànrì míng, DZ834 12a–b; cf. TEAK pp.320–21

Master Sūn Sīmǎo goes on to detail the spiritual ascent of the practitioner through these stages. First, there are the five phases of mental control and purification:

1. The mind is very agitated and only rarely tranquil. With your thinking conditioned by myriad different projections, capriciously you accept this and reject that. Fears and worries, plans and calculations go on racing around inside your mind like wild horses. This is the ordinary mind.

2. The mind is somewhat tranquil, but still much agitated. If, just for once, you are able to curb the agitation and find tranquillity for a moment, the mind immediately scatters once again. You find it very hard to control and subdue the mind, to curb its agitation and entanglement. Even so, this is the first small step towards the *Dào*.
3. The mind is half agitated and half tranquil. The tranquil mind already resembles the unified mind, but this tranquillity is subject to scattering. Tranquillity and scattering are about equal, but you have begun to pay attention to the mind's agitation and entanglement. Gradually, you observe it becoming calmer and more harmonious.
4. The mind is more tranquil and only occasionally agitated. You gradually succeed in gathering it in and, whenever it becomes agitated, you check it at once. The mind becomes fully one-pointed, and as soon as one-pointedness is lost, you immediately recover it.
5. The mind is entirely oriented toward the pure and tranquil. Whether involved in affairs or free from them, there is no agitation either way. With a powerfully controlled mind, you put an end to all scattering, and enter deep concentration. Only after you are firmly established in phase five, can you enter the seven stages (*qīhòu*). Leaving everything to the natural process, let realization dawn spontaneously. There is nothing to be actively done.

Sūn Sīmiǎo, Cúnshén liànrì míng, DZ834 13a–13b; cf. TEAK pp.321–23

The progression of the five phases runs from a state of mental restlessness, always moving; to becoming a little quieter; to arriving at a balance of quietude and restlessness; to being mostly calm; to finally resting in complete stillness. By degrees, worry, passions, and even thoughts are eliminated, the mind is made tranquil, neutralized: the practitioner is on the brink of realizing the *Dào*.

Master Sūn Sīmiǎo then describes the seven stages of purification or refinement. From stage four onwards he describes the traditional Daoist understanding of the process of spiritual refinement that involves the transmutation of *jīng* (vital force or essence) into *qì* (subtle life energy), and thence into spirit (*shén*). Ultimately, spirit is purified to the point where it is completely and effortlessly attuned to the *Dào* and pervades all existence in the spiritual realm:

1. All diseases you inherited from previous lifetimes gradually vanish; your body grows light, your mind radiant! The mind is now completely at peace within, the spirit is tranquil, and energy is at peace. . . . With

the mind resting peacefully in the mysterious realm, continue to practise one-pointedness and inner concentration. Then joy and exultation are new daily – this is called ‘realizing the *Dào* (*dédào*)’.

2. Now you leave the confines of mundane life and recover a youthful appearance! Your body in a state of joy, your mind constantly at peace, you spiritually attain a vision of the deep and mysterious. . . .
3. Extend your years to a thousand: you become an immortal (*xiānrén*)! . . . You travel extensively to all the famous mountains, spontaneously flying or walking. . . . As you step high on mist and haze, coloured clouds support your tread.
4. Refine (and transform) the body (*shēn*, *i.e.* the body pervaded by vital essence) into pure energy (*qì*, life energy), so that it may radiate throughout the body. You are now a realized being (*zhēnrén*)! You appear and disappear in the mundane world, alternating spontaneously. Your glittering clarity radiates of itself, night and day, in constant brightness. . . .
5. Refine (and transform) the life energy (*qì*) into pure spirit (*shén*) and become a spiritual being (*shénrén*)! Adapting and moving spontaneously, you are utterly boundless – with a power that can move heaven and earth, remove mountains, and drain the sea.
6. Refine (and transform) the spirit to unify with the worlds of (subtle) form, and become a perfect being (*zhìrén*). Spiritually pervading all existence, your shape and appearance are no longer fixed. You change according to circumstances, manifesting in different forms, and moving in tune with All-that-is.
7. Finally, you go beyond all beings that have bodies, and fly far away from all relationships with them. Now you can reside next to the Jade Emperor (the supreme deity) of the great *Dào* in the spiritual realm. Here, the wise and the sage gather at the farthest shore, in perfect truth. Adapting as appropriate, spiritually all-pervasive, you reach all beings. Only at this level have you truly reached the source of the *Dào*. Here, all the myriad paths come to an end. This is called the Final Ultimate (*jiūjìng*).

Sūn Sīmiǎo, Cúnshén liànrì míng, DZ834 13b–14b; cf. TEAK pp.323–24

The progression begins with the experience of continuous inner joy and happiness, proceeds through an elevated awareness of inner spiritual wonders, transitions through various stages of consciousness, reaching the level of a

spiritual immortal (*xiānrén*), then of a true (or real) man (*zhēnrén*), then of a spiritual being (*shénrén*), then of a perfect (or accomplished) being (*zhìrén*). Finally, the practitioner attains the highest goal of Daoist practice – union with the *Dào*.

Later Daoists have used Sūn Sīmiǎo's categorizations. A century later, master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn endorsed master Sūn Sīmiǎo's categorization of the five phases and seven stages, although he drops the seventh stage and inserts his own first stage.¹ Master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th) also largely concurs with Sūn Sīmiǎo's categorization.²

1. See Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn (shūyì)*, DZ1036; cf. *TMED* pp.104–5.

2. Zhāng Sānfēng *Tàijí liàndān mǐjué*, JH19.

wǔwèi piānzhèng (C), goi henshō (J) *Lit.* five (*wǔ*, *go*) aspects (*wèi*, *i*) of the relative (*piān*, *hen*) and the Absolute (*zhèng*, *shō*); five relationships between phenomena and the Universal, between appearance and Reality, between particularity and Universality, between the conditioned and the Unconditioned; five aspects of enlightenment; often translated as 'five ranks' although no specific gradation of experience is implied.

The classification was originated by the *Chán* Buddhist master Dòngshān Liángjiè (807–869), regarded as the founder of the *Chán Cáodòng* (J. *Sōtō Zen*) lineage, and further elucidated by his disciple and *Dharma* successor Cáoshān Běnjì. In the eleventh century, the Chinese master Fényáng Shànzhāo introduced the five-ranks doctrine to his school where it became part of the *kōan* tradition. *Kōans* based on the five ranks have been used in Japan in the final level of training since the time of Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768).

The doctrine is summarized by Dòngshān Liángjiè in his enigmatic *Wǔwèi sòng* ('Verses on the Five Ranks'):

Phenomena within the Real (zhèngzhōng piān):

At the beginning of the night's third watch,
before there is moonlight,
don't be surprised to meet yet not recognize
what is surely a familiar face from the past.

The Real within Phenomena (piānzhōng zhèng):

An old crone, having just awakened,
comes upon an ancient mirror;
That which is clearly reflected in front of her face
is none other than her own likeness.
Don't lose sight of your face again
and go chasing your shadow.

Coming from within the Real (zhèngzhōng lái):

Amidst nothingness there is a road far from the dust.

If you are simply able to avoid the reigning monarch's personal name,
then you will surpass the eloquence of previous dynasties.

*Going within together (piānzhōng zhì):*¹

Two crossed swords, neither permitting retreat:

dexterously wielded, like a lotus amidst fire.

Similarly, there is a natural determination to ascend the heavens.

Arriving within together (jiānzhōng dào):

Falling into neither existence nor nonexistence,
who dares harmonize?

People fully desire to exit the constant flux;

But after bending and fitting,

in the end still return to sit in the warmth of the coals.

Wúwèi sòng, in Record of Dòngshān Liángjiè, T47 1986B:525c1–8, RTLP pp.61–62

The five ranks are different aspects of enlightenment considered in terms of the relative and the Absolute, the particular and the Universal, or form and Emptiness. The theme of the poem is the illusory understanding that results from the dichotomy between what is perceived as phenomena and what is real. Dòngshān maintains that an enlightened person sees no difference between appearance and Reality; both are perceived as one. He sees things for what they really are without any bias or subjective distortion, realizing that everything is underpinned by emptiness, lacking any essential identity. A deluded person, on the other hand, dwells in a state of illusion founded upon spiritual ignorance. By separating things into likes and dislikes, loves and hates, and all the differentiations of duality, he lives in a state of mental confusion. He sees only the multiplicity of forms and phenomena, seeing everything through the lens of duality. He has no awareness of the underlying oneness.

The five ranks are:²

1. *Zhèngzhōng piān*. *Lit.* the relative in the Absolute; seeing everything existing within the Absolute; experiencing the multiplicity of phenomena as expressions of the one absolute Reality; seeing things without the distortion of the illusory ego. Portrayed in the well-known verse:

Like snow in a silver bowl,

or a white heron concealed in bright moonlight –

Compared, they are different,

unified, their Source is the same.

Bǎojìng sānmèi gē, T47 1986B:525c25–26; cf. in TBTL p.47

“Snow” and a “white heron” are symbols of relative phenomena. A “silver bowl” and “bright moonlight” are symbols of the Absolute, of the Emptiness or Void underlying everything.

2. *Piānzhōng zhèng*. Lit. the Absolute in the relative; seeing the Absolute in all relative things, as in William Blake’s well-known verse:

To see a world in a grain of sand
and a heaven in a wild flower.
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.

William Blake, Auguries of Innocence

That the Absolute is present in all relative things is expressed in a story concerning Dòngshān, in which the National Teacher Huìzhōng of Nányáng (675–755) asserts that even “non-sentient beings (inert objects) expound the *Dharma*.” He means that everything continuously expresses the Absolute, that the Absolute is present and can be experienced in everything:

The master (Dòngshān) made a visit to Guīshān (Guīshān Língyòu, 771–853) and said to him, “I have recently heard that the National Teacher Huìzhōng of Nányáng maintained the doctrine that non-sentient beings expound the *Dharma*. I have not yet comprehended the subtleties of this teaching.”

Guīshān said, “Can you, *Āchārya* (Teacher), remember the details of what you heard?”

“Yes, I can,” said the master.

“Then why don’t you try to repeat it for me?” said Guīshān.

The master began, “A monk asked Huìzhōng, ‘What sort of thing is the mind of the ancient *buddhas*?’

“The National Teacher replied, ‘It’s wall and tile rubble.’

“‘Wall and tile rubble! Isn’t that something non-sentient?’ asked the monk.

“‘It is,’ replied the National Teacher.

“The monk said, ‘And yet it can expound the *Dharma*?’

“‘It is constantly expounding it, radiantly expounding it, expounding it without ceasing,’ replied the National Teacher.

“The monk asked, ‘Then why haven’t I heard it?’

“The National Teacher said, ‘You yourself haven’t heard it, but this can’t hinder those who are able to hear it.’

“‘What sort of person acquires such hearing?’ asked the monk.

“‘All the sages have acquired such hearing,’ replied the National Teacher.

“The monk asked, ‘Can you hear it, Héshang (Teacher)?’

“‘No, I can’t,’ replied the National Teacher.

“The monk said, ‘If you haven’t heard it, how do you know that non-sentient beings expound the *Dharma*?’

“The National Teacher said, ‘Fortunately, I haven’t heard it. If I had, I would be the same as the sages, and you, therefore, would not hear the *Dharma* that I teach.’

“‘In that case, ordinary people would have no part in it,’ said the monk.

“‘I teach for ordinary people, not sages,’ replied the National Teacher.

“‘What happens after ordinary people hear you?’ asked the monk.

“‘Then they are no longer ordinary people,’ said the National Teacher.

“The monk asked, ‘According to which *sūtra* does it say that non-sentient beings expound the *Dharma*?’

“‘Clearly, you shouldn’t suggest that it’s not part of the *sūtras*. Haven’t you seen it in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*? It says: The earth expounds *Dharma*, living beings expound it, throughout the three times, everything expounds it.’” The master (Dòngshān) thus completed his narration.

Record of Dòngshān Liángjiè, T47 1986A:507b8–24, RTLP pp.23–24

Dòngshān then asks Guīshān for further explanation, but Guīshān replies that it is very difficult to understand, and relates an enigmatic story:

Guīshān said, “That teaching also exists here. However, one seldom encounters someone capable of understanding it.”

Dòngshān said, “I still don’t understand it clearly. Would the master please comment.”

Guīshān raised his fly whisk, saying, “Do you understand?”

“No, I don’t. Please, Héshang, explain,” replied Dòngshān.

Guīshān said, “It can never be explained to you by means of the mouth of one born of mother and father.”

Dòngshān asked, “Does the master have any contemporaries in the Way (*Dào*) who might clarify this problem for me?”

“From here, go to Yúnyán (Yúnyán Tánshèng, c.781–841) of Lǐlíng where you will find some linked caves. Living in those caves is a man of the Way (*Dào*), Yúnyán. If you are able to ‘push aside the grass and gaze into the wind,’ then you will find him worthy of your respect,” said Guīshān.

“Just what sort of man is he?” asked Dòngshān.

Guīshān replied, “Once he said to this old monk, ‘What should I do if I wish to follow the master?’

“This old monk replied, ‘You must immediately cut off your defilements (shed your impurities).’

“He said, ‘Then will I come up to the master’s expectation?’

“This old monk replied, ‘You will get absolutely no answer as long as I am here.’”

Record of Dòngshān Liángjiè, T47 1986A:507b24–c4, RTLP pp.24–25

Dòngshān then goes to visit Yúnyán, who tells him that if he does not experience the *Dharma* in the presence of the master, he cannot expect to experience it in inert objects:

Dòngshān accordingly took leave of Guīshān and proceeded directly to Yúnyán’s. Making reference to his previous encounter with Guīshān, he immediately asked what sort of person was able to hear the *Dharma* expounded by non-sentient beings.

Yúnyán said, “Non-sentient beings are able to hear it.”

“Can you hear it, Héshang?” asked Dòngshān.

Yúnyán replied, “If I could hear it, then you would not be able to hear the *Dharma* that I teach.”

“Why can’t I hear it?” asked Dòngshān.

Yúnyán raised his fly whisk and said, “Can you hear it yet?”

Dòngshān replied, “No, I can’t.”

Yúnyán said, “You can’t even hear it when I expound the *Dharma*; how do you expect to hear when a non-sentient being expounds the *Dharma*?”

Record of Dòngshān Liángjiè, T47 1986A:507c4–9, RTLP p.25

Finally, Dòngshān asks where this teaching is to be found:

Dòngshān asked, “In which *sūtra* is it taught that non-sentient beings expound the *Dharma*?”

Yúnyán replied, “Haven’t you seen it? In the *Amitābha Sūtra* it says, ‘Water birds, tree groves, all without exception recite the *buddha*’s name, recite the *Dharma*.’”

Reflecting on this, Dòngshān composed the following *gāthā*:

How amazing, how amazing!
 Hard to comprehend that non-sentient beings
 expound the *Dharma*.
 It simply cannot be heard with the ear,
 But when sound is heard with the eye,
 then it is understood.

Record of Dòngshān Liángjiè, T47 1986A:507c9–13, RTLP p.26

Dòngshān indicates in enigmatic fashion that to see and hear the Absolute or the true *Dharma* in all things is an inner experience in which seeing and hearing the *Dharma* become one.

3. *Zhèngzhōng lái*. *Lit.* emerging from within the Absolute; discovering the essential Meaning; dissolution of the illusory self in the essential Void, resulting in a clear understanding of the nature of phenomena. Cáoshān Běnjì's explanation is: "The meaning of a word exists in no words." According to *Chán* master Dàhuì Zōnggǎo (1089–1163) of the *Línjì* school:

When habitual anxiety arises, do not purposely get rid of it by pressure;
but at the very moment when it arises, meditate on the *gōng àn*: "Has
a dog the *buddha*-nature or not?"³

Dàhuì, "Letter to Councillor Fù," Dàhuì yǔlù 26,
T47 1998A:922a4–b6, in TBTL p.48

The well-known answer given to this *gōng àn* (J. *kōan*) by master Zhàozhōu Cōngshēn was "wú". *Wú* means 'no', 'nothingness' or 'nonbeing', and the answer in this context is interpreted to mean immersion in the Absolute, in Nonbeing, in the Void. This is the way by which the Absolute is understood.

4. *Piānzhōng zhì*. *Lit.* arising from the relative; understanding that the relative is founded upon the Absolute. On seeing his reflection in water, Dòngshān wrote:

I meet him wherever I go.
He is the same as me,
yet I am not he!
Only if you understand this
will you identify with what you are.

Transmission of the Lamp 15, T51 2076:321c22–24, in TBTL p.49

It is said that this incident resulted in Dòngshān's enlightenment. By realizing that the relative is a reflection of the Absolute – that, just as his reflection in water is a reflection of his bodily self, his illusory self is a reflection of the Real – he awakened to the Real.

5. *Jiānzhōng dào*. *Lit.* arriving within together. Cáoshān Běnjì interprets this as: "It is neither words nor no-words." Both the relative ("words") and the Absolute ("no-words") are experienced as one. The illusory distinctions between the relative and the Absolute disappear, and all things are seen as one. This is a state of true freedom: no distinction is made between

things; no judgments are made; the inner being is at peace; things are what they are.

The concepts upon which the poem and the five ranks are based were by no means new, and Dòngshān's poem has been subject to various other interpretations. Commonly quoted in this respect is the verse from the popular and very short (sixteen sentences) *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra* ('Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra' or 'Heart Sūtra'):

Form is no different from emptiness (*kōng*),
emptiness (*kōng*) is no different from form;
Form itself is emptiness (*kōng*),
emptiness (*kōng*) itself is form.

Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra, T8 251:848c8–9

1. Amending *jiānzōng zhì* to *piānzōng zhì*.
2. See Chang Chung-Yuan, *Transmission of the Lamp*, TBTL pp.46–50; “wuwei,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
3. Cf. *Keiran shūyō shū* ('Collection of Leaves Gathered in Tempestuous Brooks'), T76 2401:531a15–16.

wúxīn (Daoism) (C) *Lit.* no (*wú*) mind (*xīn*); no-mind; no attachment to thought; mental freedom from material affairs; the cessation of all emotional and intellectual turmoil; in Daoism, the state of purity and quiescence of advanced or deep meditation; mental stillness and stability, which results from emptying the mind (*xūxīn*); understood to be the natural state of being of a sage (*shèngrén*); also called *xīnzhāi* (fasting of the mind).

Literally, *xīn* refers to the physical heart; but because the heart was regarded by the ancient Chinese as the seat of human cognition, it has come to be used for what is understood as the mind. *Xīn* also refers to a person's feelings or temperament, as well as their underlying intention or motivation. For these reasons, *xīn* is quite frequently translated as 'heart-mind'.

Master Mǎ Yù (C13th) provides a basic description of the state of no-mind:

(In spirituality), no-mind (*wúxīn*) or mindlessness (*wúxīn*) is not the same as the dim-witted mindlessness (*wúxīn*) of cats and dogs. It is a matter of keeping the mind within the realm of clarity and purity, having no evil thoughts. Thus, worldly people have minds that are not clear and pure, whereas people of the *Dào* (*dàorén*) have minds that are free of impurity or defilement. But that does not mean that they are entirely mindless (*wúxīn*) like trees and rocks.

Mǎ Yù, *Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù*, DZ1057 9a

Master Chén Chōngsù (C14th), disciple and successor to master Mǎ Yù, passes on his master's advice. The “centre of the compass”, here, refers to one's inner spiritual centre of being:

With no-mind (*wúxīn*) in your mind, no-thought (*wúniàn*) in your thoughts, direct the attention towards the centre of the compass (*guīzhōng*), and merge with the one Energy (*yīqì*).

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhīnán, DZ243 13a, JY211

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) uses an example from the natural world to illustrate the meaning:

(It is said that) a fierce tiger will not harm an infant (*yīng'ér*), and that a hungry hawk will not snatch an infant (*yīng'ér*). How can this be? Because the infant (*yīng'ér*) has no-mind (*wúxīn*).

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of the subtle function of having no-mind (*wúxīn*).

The only reason people cannot attain the *Dào* is because they have a mind (*xīn*). Having a mind means having a self. Having a self means having a perception that others are separate. The moment there is a perception of others as separate from themselves, people immediately contrive to benefit themselves at the expense of others. Full of all manner of clever schemes, their selfish desires run rampant, their inherent conscience (*tiānlíang*) completely obscured. If you cannot even accumulate virtues, how can you presume to realize the *Dào*?

True seekers of the *Dào* hasten to break down the mountainous barrier between themselves and others, and steer clear of narrow byways. They discipline themselves and adapt to the world. They see themselves and others as the same. They regard all classes of people as equal. They attend to things and situations as they come. They deal with them, but are not affected by them. They let things go and do not cling to them. They approach every situation they encounter with no-mind (*wúxīn*). Having no-mind (*wúxīn*), they have no ego. Having no ego, they are pure (*jìng*) within. Being pure (*jìng*) within, they are clear and without blemish – totally merged with the celestial law (*tiānlǐ*).

This is called original virtue (*yuándé*). Original virtue has neither form nor sign. It cannot be seen or heard. It is a virtue unified with heaven and earth, as radiant as the sun and moon, as ordered as the four seasons. . . . Then creation cannot constrain you; the myriad things cannot harm you.

Liú Yīmíng, Wúdào lù, ZW268, DS18

In his poem 'In Praise of No-Mind', master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) describes various virtues and aspects of a state of no-mind:

I know neither spiritual practice nor wrong doing.
I have benefited neither myself nor others.
I abide neither by rules and disciplines nor by prohibitions.
I know neither rituals nor music,
 nor do I practise benevolence or justice.
Of what other people can do, I can do nothing.

When hungry, I eat; when thirsty, I drink.
When tired, I sleep; when awake, I move about.
When hot, I wear light clothes; when cold, I cover up.

With no thoughts or ideas,
 what is there to be depressed or elated about?
With no schemes or regrets,
 I have nothing upon which to dwell or ponder.

The failures and successes of life are nothing but lodgings on a journey –
 I liken them to trees in the wood, where birds take their rest.
Whatever comes, I let it come; whatever goes, I let it go –
 neither escaping, nor pursuing, nor praising, nor disparaging.

I despise neither ugliness nor evil,
 nor do I envy beauty or kindness.
I seek no quiet places,
 nor avoid bustling towns.
I speak no ill of others, nor boast of myself.
I do not venerate those of high esteem,
 nor do I slight the insignificant and lowly.

Friend or foe, superior or inferior, whether near or far,
 sadness or delight, gain or loss,
 honour or disgrace, danger or comfort –
My mind sees no difference:
 unperturbed, it accepts them as the same.

I am not at the forefront, seeking fortune,
 nor do I cause any calamity.
I adapt when obliged to,
 I act when I have to.

A sword blade does not scare me,
 nor am I frightened by a mere tiger.
 I call things whatever is appropriate,
 accepting no restrictions of names or convention.

Forms do not sway my eyes; sounds do not enter my ears.
 I see all forms and appearances as deceptive and illusory –
 shapes and sounds, men and women: none are lasting.

Mindless (*wúxīn*) of physical appearances,
 I am neither entangled nor attached;
 Simply being myself and free, nothing ties me down.

The all-encompassing light (*yuán*) of sublime awareness (*jué*)
 shines within and without, encompassing the four quarters –
 with and without form, near and far.
 This light (*guāng*) is a light
 that arises out of Nothingness (*fēi*),
 like the moon reflected in water.
 Since it is difficult to grasp,
 how can it be described?
 To understand its sublime wonder,
 one must transcend far and beyond.
 If you ask me for my main objective,
 this is simply it.

Zhāng Bódūān, “Wúxīn sòng,” in Wúzhēn piān, DZ141

Master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) recommends completely emptying the mind, giving some general advice on how this can be accomplished:

Mindfulness (*yǒuxīn*) should give way to no-mind (*wúxīn*), so that the mind (*xīn*) is empty, becomes incorporeal and spiritual, beyond birth and death. If you want to be rid of negative thoughts, then lay hold of positive thoughts (*zhèngjué*), and they will cease of themselves so that your mind will be like the bright moon in space – immaculate, containing no foreign matter.

Zhào Bìchén, Xīngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI pp.48–49

The *Scripture on Western Ascension* (C5th CE), attributing its words to Lǎozǐ, laments the afflictions of both mind and attention, recognizing that it is the spirit, rather than the mind that gives life. In fact, far from enlivening him, the mind “kills” him:

What gives me life is the spirit (*shén*); what kills me is the mind (*xīn*). Mind (*xīn*) and attention (*yì*) are afflictions to me; thus, if I am of no-mind (*wúxīn*), what do I know?

Xīshēng jīng 17, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 4:3a–b, TMPS p.246

And:

The sage . . . always makes emptiness his self and nonbeing his mind. These two are called the self of no-self and the mind of no-mind (*wúxīn*). In this way, the spirit is guarded. To guard the spirit and fully comprehend the mystery without hindrance: this is union with the *Dào*.

Xīshēng jīng 24, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 5:3b–4b; cf. TMPS p.249

In a commentary on this scripture, master Wéi Jié (C6th) explains:

As long as there is mind (*xīn*) and conscious thinking (*yì*), there will be involvement with (the world) and active life. This is an affliction to life. When there is no-mind (*wúxīn*), there is no more knowledge. So what affliction can there be?

Wéi Jié, *Xīshēng jīng jízhu*, DZ726 17:3; cf. in TMPS p.182

The eighteenth-century hermit known as Yǎngzhēnzǐ (‘Master who Cultivates Reality’) recalls an exchange between a master and his disciple in ancient times. The disciple asks, “If I want to learn the state of no-mind (*wúxīn*), how can I do so?” The master replies:

Do not identify with the mind (*xīn*) when dealing with circumstances.
Do not identify with circumstances when dealing with the mind. This is the beginning and end of it.

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, *Yǎngzhēn jí*, JY241

In a treatise on the Daoist method of meditation known as ‘sitting in forgetfulness (*zuòwàng*)’, master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) advises that it is wise to maintain silence regarding the experiences and insights enjoyed on the path to enlightenment. In a state of no-mind, a mind without expectations or intentions, he seeks only oneness with the *Dào*:

A great man (*dàrén*) harbours his clarity and stores his brilliance (inner light and wisdom) in preparation for complete perfection. He concentrates his spirit (*shén*), treasures his life energy (*qì*), studies the *Dào*, and makes his mind no-mind (*wúxīn*), so that his spirit can merge with the *Dào*. This truly is realizing the *Dào*.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn* 7, DZ1036 15a, JY213; cf. SSTK p.109

Master Liú Yīmíng further elucidates the meaning of *wúxīn*. Here, the “mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*)” is a mind infused with the presence of the *Dào*:

Speaking of having ‘no-mind (*wúxīn*)’ refers to the absence of the human mind (*rénxīn*). ‘Having mind (*yǒuxīn*)’ refers to the presence of the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*). When there is no human mind (*rénxīn*), (transcendence of) *yīn* and *yáng* and the experience (of universality and wholeness) is immediate. When there is the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*), it is the result of effort and endurance in (spiritual) practice.

The immediate experience (of universality and wholeness) arises naturally (*zìrán*), without effort or action. Yet the endurance comes from effort, which does involve action and doing. Both action (*yǒuwéi*) and non-action (*wúwéi*) have their own subtle secrets. In short, they are distinguished by the absence of the human mind (*rénxīn*) and the presence of the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*).

When the great *Dào* is achieved and accomplished, there is neither existence (*yǒu*) nor nonexistence (*wú*). Phenomena and the self both return to emptiness (*kōng*), entering the realm of the ultimate spiritual Truth. Then, not only is there no further use for the human mind (*rénxīn*), there is also no further use for the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*).

Liú Yīmíng, Kōngyì (31, 32) chǎnzhēn, Zágua zhuàn, ZW246

Master Liú Yīmíng also says that there is a significant difference between the “human mind (*rénxīn*)” and the “true mind (*zhēnxīn*)”:

Those who are ignorant of this mistake the human mind (*rénxīn*) for the true mind (*zhēnxīn*). This is incorrect. The true mind (*zhēnxīn*) is having no-mind (*wúxīn*). Only by having no-mind (*wúxīn*) can you have an inherently good mind. With this inherently good mind, how difficult can it be to control and remove the self?

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

He says that the ordinary human mind obscures the true mind. But when one lets go of the human mind, the true mind is automatically revealed:

No-mind (*wúxīn*) means that there is no human mind (*rénxīn*); when there is no human mind, the true mind (*zhēnxīn*) is automatically present.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

See also: **xīn** (►1).

wúxīn, wúniàn (C), mushin, munen, musō (J), bsam pa med pa (T) *Lit.* no-mind (*mu-shin*, *wú-xīn*); no-thought (*bsam pa med pa*), no-reflection (*mu-nen*, *wú-niàn*); no-image, no-sign, signless (*mu-sō*); widely used and variously interpreted terms with a spread of meaning. The *Zen* understanding of *mushin* has had a significant influence on Japanese martial arts.

Mushin (C. *wúxīn*) is used in conjunction or synonymously with the Japanese *munen* (C. *wúniàn*). If there is a distinction between the two, it is found in the conventional translations – *mushin* as ‘no-mind’ and *munen* as ‘no-thought’. The colloquial meaning of *mushin* is ‘innocence’, while *wúxīn* is a Daoist term adopted by early Chinese Buddhists to explain the *Mahāyāna* concept of *shūnyatā* (S. emptiness, void). *Musō* (C. *wúxiāng*) is also the standard translation of *ānimitta* (S. signless), which refers to the unconditioned ‘characteristic’ of absolute Reality that is beyond distinctions, beyond the external appearance of things, transcending perceptible forms.

In the *Yuishiki* (‘Consciousness Only’, C. *Wéishì*, S. *Yogāchāra*) school of Japanese Buddhism, *mushin* implies the *goi-mushin*, the five (*goi*) states of no-mind in which *ishiki* (thought consciousness, S. *mano-vijñāna*) has ceased to function. These are: deep sleep (*suimin*); death agony (*monzetsu*); thought-free meditation (*musōjō*); birth in the thought-free or cognition-free heaven (*musōten*, C. *wúxiāng tiān*, S. *asaṃjñika*, Pa. *asañña*) that is associated with the fourth *jhāna* (state of meditative absorption); and illusion-destroying meditation (*metsujinjō*).¹

In *Zen* and *Chán* Buddhism, the terms describe a meditative state of mind characterized by neutrality towards both thoughts and outer circumstances, in which life energy flows through the mind unimpeded and unmodified by the intervention of the self or ego, with its biases, likes, dislikes, and pervasive sense of an illusory identity.

Associated terms include: *munen-musō* (no-thought no-image); *mushin-zammai* (no-mind concentration), which is one of the one hundred and eight forms of *samādhi* (J. *zammai*); and *mushinjō* (no-mind meditation), in which mental functions are in abeyance. Two kinds of *mushinjō* (thought-free meditation) are identified – *musōjō* (S. *asaṃjñā-samāpatti*), which leads to rebirth in the thought-free or cognition-free heaven of *musōten*, and *metsujinjō* (illusion-destroying meditation). *Mushinjō* is contrasted with *ushinjō*, which refers to those forms of meditation that involve discursive or discriminatory thought processes, such as pondering the meaning of a *kōan* (a *Zen* riddle with no logical solution).

In *zazen* (sitting) meditation, *mushin*, *mushin-munen* and *munen-musō* imply the temporary suspension of all thought processes, in which the mind rests within itself in a state of contemplative emptiness. Awareness is not lost, but the thinking and cognizing part of the mind is no longer active. This state requires a significant degree of meditative concentration, and the ability to hold the mind in stillness. It is the positive state of a focused mind, not a vacant mind.

In outer life, no-mind (*mushin*) refers to a state in which thoughts are free from attachment to their objects, in which cognition of physical things takes place without attachment, and in which thinking takes place without any sense of an individual self – *i.e.* there is effectively no thinker and no actor, and actions leave behind no mental impressions. The mind functions in a completely natural, unselfconscious state. As the *Zen* saying goes, “Active all day, he does nothing.”

So far as external life is concerned, no-mind (*mushin*) is a free mind, a mind that flows freely and does not generate any particular thought. It is not the absence of thinking, it is rather the absence of the intervention of another mind – that of the thinker. It is concentration on the matter in hand and forgetfulness of self. Like a highly polished mirror, no-mind (*mushin*) reflects everything but is affected by nothing, its pristine nature never changing, free from the fetters of attachment and duality that come through ego biases, pre-conceived ideas, analysis, and interpretations. No-mind-no-thought (*mushin-munen*) is a state of spontaneity and naturalness, of action in non-action, where actions take place effortlessly in response to circumstances.

No-mind (*mushin*) or no-thought (*munen*) both describe the state in which creative energy flows unimpeded. This is the state in which inspiration courses effortlessly through the mind of a writer, poet, or painter; the effortless performance of a musician or any other artist. It is what advanced athletes and sportsmen call being ‘in the zone’. It is when the bow and the arm of the archery master have become one, and the arrow is released without thought yet at entirely the right moment, landing precisely where intended.² It is when the sword and the sword master are in harmony, his movement effortless. The highest no-mind in outer life is the expression of no-mind attained in meditation.

The state of no-mind has been interpreted in various ways. Since no-mind can be experienced at many levels, the different interpretations can be understood to some extent as arising from experience of different levels of the one Reality. The *Chán* master Sheng-yen (1930–2009) regards no-mind (*wúxīn*) as the first staging post of the meditator:

Once the harmonious concentration of body, breath and mind has been established, the experience of *samādhi* and wisdom will be within reach. The Buddhist tradition offers many different techniques to develop *samādhi*, wisdom and insight, each of which is designed to counter impediments and develop the mind in its own particular way. Nonetheless, their basic principle is the same: they strive to take the mind from its usual scattered and coarse condition, simplify it and unify it with concentration, and bring it to what we call the insight of ‘no-mind (*wúxīn*)’ or ‘no-thought (*wúniàn*)’.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB p.44

The *Chán* master Huángbò Xīyùn (d.c.850) sees the primal mind as the ultimate Reality, the essential *buddha* and the *Dharma*, which, he says, are all identical with no-mind:

Buddhas and sentient beings both grow out of one mind (*yīxīn*), and there is no other reality than this one mind (*yīxīn*). It has been in existence since the beginningless past; it knows neither birth nor death; it is neither blue nor yellow; it has neither shape nor form; it is beyond the category of being and nonbeing; it is not to be measured by age, old or new; it is neither long nor short; it is neither large nor small; for it transcends all limits, words, traces, and opposites. It must be taken just as it is in itself; when an attempt is made on our part to grasp it in our thoughts, it eludes. It is like space whose boundaries are altogether beyond measurement; no concepts are applicable here. . . .

This mind is no other than *buddha*; there is no *buddha* outside mind, nor is there any mind outside *buddha*. This mind is pure and, like space, has no specific forms (whereby it can be distinguished from other objects). As soon as you raise a thought and begin to form an idea of it, you ruin the reality itself, because you then attach yourself to form. Since the beginningless past, there is no *buddha* who has ever had an attachment to form. . . .

By the *Dharma* is meant mind, for there is no *Dharma* apart from mind. Mind is no other than the *Dharma*, for there is no-mind (*wúxīn*) apart from the *Dharma*. This mind in itself is no-mind (*wúxīn*), and there is no no-mind (*wúxīn*) either. When no-mind (*wúxīn*) is sought after by a mind, this is making it a particular object of thought. (So) there is only testimony of silence; it goes beyond thinking. Therefore it is said that (the *Dharma*) cuts off the passage to words and puts an end to all form of mentation. . . .

This mind is the Source, the *buddha* absolutely pure in its nature, and is present in every one of us. All sentient beings, however mean and degraded, are not in this particular respect different from *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* – they are all of one substance. Only because of their imaginations and false discriminations, sentient beings work out their *karma* and reap its result, while, in their *buddha*-essence itself, there is nothing corresponding to it; the Essence is empty and allows everything to pass through, it is quiet and at rest, it is illuminating, it is peaceful and productive of bliss.

Huángbò Xīyùn, *Denshin Hōyō*, T48 2012A:379c18–380b18; cf. in *MZBS* pp.112–13,

116–17

According to a text attributed to Huìnéng (638–713), the sixth patriarch of Chinese *Chán* Buddhism, no-thought (*wúniàn*) means to allow the mind to

function freely, but never to let it become impure by association with the senses or to develop any attachment. Huìnéng brought the notion of *wúniàn* to popular attention by making it a central aspect of his teachings:

What is no-thought (*wúniàn*)? No-thought (*wúniàn*) means to view all *dharma*s (things, phenomena) with a mind undefiled by attachment. The mind pervades all places, yet remains attached to no place. Just purify your intrinsic mind and permit the six consciousnesses (the five senses, plus mental awareness) to come and go freely through these six gates and to penetrate without obstruction, but to remain pure and unmixed with the six sensory fields. That is the *prajñā samādhi* (wisdom-concentration), which is freedom and liberation, and is called the practice of no-thought (*wúniàn*). Not thinking of the myriad things (*bǎiwù*) and constantly blocking your thought process is called bondage within the *dharma*, and is an extreme view. If you awaken to the *dharma* of no-thought (*wúniàn*), you will penetrate into all things thoroughly, and will see all *buddha*-realms. If you awaken to the no-thought (*wúniàn*) *dharma*, you have arrived at the status of a *buddha*...

Good friends, from ancient times up to the present, this teaching of mine has taken no-thought (*wúniàn*) as its central doctrine, the formless (*wúxiàng*) as its essence, and non-abiding (*wúzhù*) as its basis. The formless is to transcend form even while in the midst of form. No-thought (*wúniàn*) is to be without thought even in the midst of thought. Non-abiding (*wúzhù*) is the original nature of man.

In the world of good and evil, attractiveness and ugliness, friendliness and hostility, when faced with offensive, critical or argumentative language, you should treat it all as empty and have no thought of retaliation. In every thought, do not think of former thoughts. If thoughts concerning the past, the present and the future continue to follow one another, our thoughts will never end. This is bondage. Not to dwell on *dharma*s (things) from thought to thought is to be free from bondage. That is to take non-abiding (*wúzhù*) as the basis.

Good friends, to transcend all external forms is called the formless. To be able to transcend forms is the pure essence of *dharma*s. That is to take the formless as the essence.

Good friends, to keep one's mind undefiled under all circumstances is called no-thought (*wúniàn*). In your thoughts, always remain detached from circumstances; do not let thoughts arise concerning them...

Good friends, why is no-thought (*wúniàn*) taken as the central doctrine? If a man in his delusion has thoughts related to his circumstances, then heterodox ideas stemming from these thoughts

will arise, and passions and false views will be produced from them. That is why this teaching has established no-thought (*wúniàn*) as its central doctrine.

Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch (Liùzǔ tánjīng), T48 2008:351a27–b5, 353a10–28;
cf. *PSSP* pp.153, 137–39, *PSPM* pp.33–34, 43–44, *SPDS* pp.150–52, 209, 212

In this context, *wúzhù* (non-abiding) and *bùzhù* (not abiding), like *wúniàn*, imply a mind that is unattached to anything:

Not abiding (*bùzhù*) anywhere (means that) one does not abide in good and evil, existence and nothingness, inside, outside, or in between. Not abiding (*bùzhù*) in emptiness and not abiding (*bùzhù*) in non-emptiness, not abiding (*bùzhù*) in concentration and not abiding (*bùzhù*) in the absence of concentration – that is not abiding (*bùzhù*) anywhere. Only this not abiding (*bùzhù*) anywhere is the (true) abode. When one attains this, it is called the non-abiding mind (*wúzhù*). The non-abiding mind (*wúzhù*) is the *buddha*-mind.

Dàzhū Huīhǎi, Dūnwù rùdào yàomén lùn, X63 1223:18b7–10, *OMWH* p.159

According to Huìnéng's view, thought itself is not the problem, but attachment to thought, which leads to a proliferation of dualistic concepts and speculations concerning one's sensory experience, together with the arising of impure thoughts. The notion of *wúniàn* later became the focus of the division between the schools of sudden (*dùn*) and gradual (*jiàn*) awakening (*wù*). The gradual school maintained that transcendence of thought was achieved by a steady cleansing of the mind from impurities and conceptual, dualistic thinking. The sudden school, on the other hand, maintained that one only had to perceive one's true nature (*jiàn xìng*) by means of no-thought (*wúniàn*), and enlightenment was at hand. In some instances, the practice was taken to extremes, and *wúniàn* was used as a justification for abandoning, not only ritual practices, but also monastic precepts and even meditation.³

See also: **animitta**, **wúxīn (Daoism)**.

1. See "goi-mushin," *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary, JEDS*.
2. Eugen Herrigel, *Zen In the Art of Archery*, ZAAH pp.40–48, 56–57, 76–86, *passim*.
3. See "wunian," *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, PDB*.

xiāndān (C) *Lit.* elixir of immortality (*xiān*); elixir of life. See **dān**.

xiāntāi, tāixiān (C) *Lit.* immortal (*xiān*) embryo (*tāi*); in the Daoist *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, the original, inherent and potential spiritual awareness within every human being; also called *yīlíng* (unified spirit, unified awareness), *yángshén* (light spirit), *shēnwài shēn* (body beyond the body), the infant (*yīng'ér*), *jīnhuá* (golden flower), and so on. *Xiāntāi* is more or less synonymous with *shèngtāi* (spiritual embryo). Where a distinction is made, *shèngtāi* is used more in the context of the growth and development of innate spiritual awareness, while *xiāntāi* refers to final realization of this awareness. See **shèngtāi**.

xīndì (C) *Lit.* mind (*xīn*) + ground (*dì*); a person's essential mind, character, or moral nature; hence, state of mind. *Xīn* means 'heart', 'mind', 'centre', and 'core'. Hence the expression 'heart-mind', which is often used in translation. Master Wáng Zhé (C12th) uses a familiar Eastern simile:

'Leaving the mundane world' does not mean that the body leaves (the world); it refers to a state of mind (*xīndì*). The body is like a lotus root, the mind (*xīn*) like a lotus blossom. The root is in mud (*ní*), but the blossom in the empty void (*xūkōng*) (in the clear air). For one who has realized the *Dào*, his body may reside in the mundane world, but his mind (*xīn*) dwells in the realm of the sages (*shèngjìng*).

Wáng Zhé, *Chóngyáng lǐjiào shíwǔ lùn* 15, JY190 5b–6a, DZ1233; cf. HDP8 p.46

xìng, běnxìng, yuánxìng, zhēnxìng (C) *Lit.* nature, essence, character (*xìng*); original, source, root, fundamental, or essential (*běn*) nature; original, former, primary, or primordial (*yuán*) nature; real, true, or perfect (*zhēn*) nature; the original nature of a human being, the recovery or realization of which is the primary focus of Daoist practice. *Xìng* is a general term for the nature of something, but in Daoist texts it generally refers more specifically to the original, essential or intrinsic nature of something, specifically, the original, true, or real nature of a human being. *Xìng* is often used in the expression *xìngmìng*, where *mìng* means one's true spiritual life – hence the translation 'original nature and true spiritual life'.

The term *dàoxìng* (*Dào*-nature) has a very similar meaning, but conceptually it refers to the essential Reality that underlies all things – which in the final analysis is no different from one's true nature. Therefore, any difference that is understood to exist between one's true nature and essential Reality is intellectual, not actual. According to the *Dàojiào yìshū*, this "*Dào*-nature (*dàoxìng*)" is "embodied in all conscious beings and even all animals, plants, trees, and rocks".¹

The concept of *dàoxìng* is founded directly upon the Buddhist *fóxìng* (*buddha*-nature), which translates the Sanskrit *buddhadhātu* (*buddha*-nature,

buddha-essence), a term whose meaning is closely related to *tathāgata-garbha* (embryo of buddhahood).

Since everything created has its origin and being in the *Dào*, its original state or nature is the same purity, simplicity, and power that is the *Dào*. The *shén* (spirit), the true self of any living creature, though apparently ‘separated’, is always a part of the *Dào*, and retains its primordial state of purity. However, awareness of the spirit and its original state has been lost through the mind’s entanglement with transient phenomena.

Wáng Zhé (C12th) points to the universal, cosmic nature of the *xìng*:

Your body (*shēn*) may reside in a single room, but your (original) nature (*xìng*) will fill the heavens, earth, and whole cosmos. The multitude of sages (*shèng*) silently protects and supports you. Immortal lords (*xiānjūn*) in limitless numbers invisibly encircle and surround you. Your name becomes recorded in the Purple Palace (*Zǐfǔ*, i.e. heaven) and established among the ranked immortals. Your physical form may remain in the world of dust, but your mind (*xīn*) is already illuminated beyond all beings.

Wáng Zhé, *Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn* 12, JY190 5a, DZ1233; cf. HDP8 p.43

Shuījīngzǐ (*aka.* Zhào Yīmíng, fl.C16th) reminds seekers that this original nature needs to be rediscovered. Seekers of the *Dào* are encouraged to search for an enlightened teacher in order to learn the proper method of recovering the original state of purity. According to Daoist philosophy, this is accomplished by harmonizing the *yīn* and *yáng* (negative and positive, earth and heaven, material and spiritual) energies and by certain spiritual practices, including meditation:

You must find an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*) to show you your (original) nature (*xìng*) and the way of heaven (*tiāndào*), and to instruct you in the methods of accumulating *yáng* fire and dispelling *yīn* energy.

Shuījīngzǐ, *Qīngjìng jīng* (9) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM p.56

The *Book of the Masters of Huáinán* (C2nd BCE) indicates the steps that are necessary before it is possible to return to one’s original nature:

The basis of self-discipline is to govern the passions. The basis of governing the passions is to be satisfied with what one has. The basis of being satisfied with what one has is to be in harmony with the natural flow of events. The basis of being in harmony with the natural flow of events is to simplify things. The basis of simplifying things is to control desires. The basis of controlling desires is to return to

one's (original) nature (*xìng*). The basis of returning to one's (original) nature (*xìng*) is to remove burdens.

Huáinánzǐ 14, DZ1184

In the *Book of Master Wén* (c.200 BCE), Lǎozǐ is quoting as saying that the spiritual path to realization of one's original nature has always been the same. "Since ancient times," he says,

those who practise *Dào* control their passions and temperaments by restraining the functioning of their minds (*zhì xīnshù*). They cultivate (develop their spiritual life) while blending in; they stand firm while adapting (to events). They allow nothing without benefit to their (original) nature (*xìng*) to burden their virtue (*dé*). They allow nothing without advantage to their (spiritual) life (*shēng*) to disrupt their harmony. . . . They indulge neither the body nor the mind. Therefore, they are appropriately moderate and serve as exemplars to the world. They eat enough for the belly, dress enough for the body, occupy enough space for living, and act in accordance with the situation.

Wénzǐ 3, DZ746

In his *Vegetable Roots Discourses*, master Hóng Zìchéng (C16th) similarly observes that awareness of one's "(original) nature" first requires the elimination of "impure thoughts":

Only when there are no impure thoughts in your mind can you discern your (original) nature (*xìng*). To seek your (original) nature (*xìng*) while still enmeshed in erroneous thoughts is like trying to see the moon's reflection in water while disturbing its surface. When all your thoughts are pure, then your heart will become clear. Without ousting the worldly concerns that afflict the mind, not only will it be in vain to seek a clear mind (*míngxīn*), it will make the mind even more obscure.

Hóng Zìchéng, Càigēntán 171, CGT; cf. TRW p.171

Therefore, a wise practitioner, attempting to return to the state of purity and simplicity, of original nature or original essence, remains centred in *Dào*.

Like all mystics, the twelfth-century Daoist master Wáng Zhé (*aka*. Chóngyáng) distinguishes between one's real nature and the illusory body of flesh made of the "four fakes" – the essentially unreal elements of earth, water, fire, and air. The real, immortal nature is called "original (*běnlái*)" because it existed prior to the formation of the mortal body. All human beings unknowingly possess this intrinsic immortality and can realize it through the cultivation of inner purity and tranquillity. Employing alchemical terms as spiritual metaphors, Wáng Zhé writes:

Your original (*běnlái*) true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is the gold elixir (*jīndān*).
 (The body made of) the four fakes (*sìjiǎ*)
 is the furnace in which you concoct the elixir (*tuán*).
 Without becoming defiled (by impure thoughts) and without thinking,
 eliminate your delusions.
 Then automatically (your true nature) will come to the fore
 and enter the altar of the immortals (*xiān*).

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng quánzhēn jí, DZ1153 2:7b, JY187; cf. in TPEQ p.58

In his *Cúnshén liànnqì míng* ('Inscription on the Visualization of Spirit and Refinement of Energy'), Master Sūn Sīmiǎo says that the spirit (*shén*) arises from the cosmic, primordial, or original Energy (*yuánqì*). Both spirit and life energy (*qì*), which keep the body alive, arise from this primordial Energy. When spirit and life energy are peacefully merged into the primordial Energy, then "you will be one with your true nature (*zhēnxìng*)":

The body (*shēn*) is the habitation of spirit (*shén*) and energy (*qì*). As long as spirit and energy are there, the body is healthy and strong. As soon as spirit and energy scatter, the body dies. Therefore, if you wish to keep yourself whole, first calm your spirit and energy.

Understand that Energy (*qì*) is the mother of spirit; spirit is the son of Energy. Only when Energy and spirit are united can you live long and not die.

If you . . . wish to calm the spirit (*shén*), first refine the primordial Energy (*yuánqì*). When this energy (*qì*) dwells within the body, the spirit is calm and energy is like an ocean. With the ocean of energy full to overflowing, the mind is calm and the spirit is peaceful and still (*āndìng*). When this stillness (*dìng*) is not scattered, body and mind come together in tranquillity. When tranquillity becomes absolute stillness, then immortality is attained.

Remain constantly present and still at the source of the *Dào*, and you will automatically become a sage (*shèng*). Then energy (*qì*) will pervade spirit and its many created projections, and spirit will pervade all wisdom (*huì*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). With your (spiritual) life (*mìng*) and your embodiment preserved, you will be one with your true nature (*zhēnxìng*). You will be as old as the sun and moon! Then your path (*dào*) will be complete!

Sūn Sīmiǎo, Cúnshén liànnqì míng 12a–b; cf. TEAK pp.320–21

The *Secret of the Golden Flower* says that this "true nature (*zhēnxìng*)" transcends the transience of material existence:

Lǚzǔ said, “Compared to the (rest of) creation, human beings are like mayflies (which live only briefly). Compared to the great *Dào*, the creation is also a transient reflection. Only one’s original spirit (*yuánshén*) or true nature (*zhēnxìng*) transcend space and time.”

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 2, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

In his *Anthology on Cultivation of Realization*, the eighteenth-century hermit known as Yǎngzhēnzǐ says that this true nature is the original spirit (*yuánshén*):

The true nature (*zhēnxìng*) of a human being is the original spirit (*yuánshén*). Because it is conscious, enlightened and unfathomable, subtly responsive and unlimited, it is called spirit (*shén*). It is called original (*yuán*) to distinguish it from the acquired thinking spirit (*sīlǜzhīshén*).

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241; cf. TMED p.50

All that is required is for the mind to become “peaceful and still”:

Our true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is entirely spiritual. The moment a thought arises, it flies off. In order to restrain it, you must contemplate (*chá*) its source (*zōng*). This practice is located entirely in the eyes (*mù*). When the mind settles down in its own home (behind the eyes), then the mind will always remain peaceful and still (*qīngjìng*), and the water of the spirit (*shénshuǐ*) will return to its origin (*guīgēn*). Over a period of time, the supreme treasure (*zhìbǎo*) grows, gradually filling (the home), . . . creating springtime throughout your entire embodiment (*tǐ*).

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says that one’s true nature is obscured by the confusion of the human mind and emotions. But when responding with inner clarity to the events of life, then one’s “true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is evident”:

When responding to things without confusion (*bùmí*), the truth of the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is always present. When the truth of the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is always present, then unrighteousness does not arise in the human mind (*rénxīn*). When unrighteousness does not arise in the human mind (*rénxīn*), then the temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) does not develop. When the temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) does not develop, then the inherent nature (*tiānfù zhī xìng*) is clear and bright, like a crystal tower, unattached and independent, unmoving and unwavering, spontaneously still.

In short, the effect of dwelling inwardly with your (true) nature (*xìng*) rests entirely in the exercise of responding without confusion (*bùmí*). When confused (*mí*), the human mind (*rénxīn*) is active in dealing with affairs. Then your true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is obscured and your false nature (*jiǎxìng*) grows. When unconfused (*bùmí*), the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is active in dealing with affairs. Then the false nature (*jiǎxìng*) is transformed, and your true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is evident.

Líu Yíming, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

The reason for human confusion, he says, is negative emotions. Just as a dirty mirror must be cleaned before it can reflect the light, so must the dirt of the mind be removed before the “original nature (*běnxìng*)” can shine through:

Muddy water is turbid; let it settle, and it will become clear. A dirty (*gòu*) mirror (*jìng*) is dull; polish it, and it will become bright.

As I observe this, I realize the *dào* (way, principle) of cleansing the mind to reveal its (original) nature (*xìng*).

The human mind is turbid and its nature disturbed because it is full of greed (*tān*), displeasure (*chēn*), folly (*chī*) and attachment (*ài*), and occupied with pleasure (*xǐ*), anger (*nù*), sadness (*āi*), and delight (*lè*). Moreover, the accumulated habits and ‘guests’ (*kèqì*, tendencies, impressions) from past *kalpas* (S. aeons) deceive and beguile the mind, blocking up and concealing the spiritual opening (*língqiào*). Like muddy water or a dirty (*gòu*) mirror (*jìng*), the original true mind (*běnlái zhēnxīn*) and true nature (*zhēnxìng*) are completely obscured and lost. They become helpless, allowing the three negative forces (*sānshī*, corpses, demons, death bringers) to take control and the six bandits (the five senses, plus the aspect of the mind that engages in perception) to run wild. They are attached to everything of the world. They absorb everything of the world and fill themselves up with unspeakable defilement (*huìwū*).

If you can suddenly wake up and change direction, eliminate worldly attachments, wash away defilement, gradually refine and wipe away a lifetime’s accumulation of diverse defects and external impressions (*kèqì*), delusional thoughts and perverse actions, and with increased persistence and increased time in practice, refine and cleanse until there is nothing left to refine and cleanse, until no residue of defilement remains, until the gold is pure – then your original mind (*běnxīn*) and original nature (*běnxìng*) will automatically appear in all their fullness. Then the radiance of enlightenment (*huìguāng*) will suddenly arise, instantly illuminating the entire universe (*lit.* the three thousand worlds), as if you were holding it in the palm of your hand. Then your attainment is absolute, unobstructed by anything.

This is like muddy water returning to clarity when it settles, or a dirty (*gòu*) mirror (*jìng*) recovering its brightness when polished. Then original nature (*běnxìng*) is as perfect as before.

Liú Yǐmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Using another example, master Liú Yǐmíng says that for this original nature to become apparent, the “weeds” of desires must be completely uprooted:

When clearing weeds, you must dig out all the roots so that they do not regrow. When planting trees, you must care for the roots so that the trees do not wither because they have not been firmly rooted.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of removing the false (*qùjiǎ*) and cultivating the True (*xiūzhēn*).

All the egoistic desires (*sīyù*) and habitual energies (*xíqì*) of human beings are false (*jiǎ*). The false is like the weeds. The inherent original true nature (*běnxìng tiānliáng*) is the Truth (*zhēn*). The Truth is like a tree.

To remove the false (*jiǎ*), you must root out all egoistic desires (*sīyù*) and habitual energies (*xíqì*), so that they do not regrow. If even the slightest residue of defilement remains, it will quietly regrow over time from small to big, and bring great harm.

To cultivate the Truth (*xiūzhēn*), at every moment you must attend to and care for the origin (*yuánběn*) and the original inherent Truth (*gùyǒu tiānzhēn*), nurture and cultivate it at all times, irrigate it with the water of spirit (*shénshuǐ*), keep it warm with the fire of Truth (*zhēnhuǒ*), never let it move or be disturbed, protect and look after it in every way.

Continue with care and cultivation, until the root of the origin (*gēnběn*) is strong and firm, until your energy (*qì*) is full and your spirit (*shén*) is whole. Then you will become immune to the influence of the myriad things, and will experience no further difficulties.

Therefore, when removing the false (*qùjiǎ*), you must continue until there is not the slightest trace of falsity, like digging out the roots of weeds. When cultivating the Truth (*xiūzhēn*), you must continue until even the slightest thing is true, like planting deep to give a tree firm roots.

An ancient scripture said, “As long as the slightest negative energy (*yīnqì*) remains, you will not become an immortal. As long as the slightest positive energy (*yángqì*) remains, you cannot die.” How true!

Liú Yǐmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The process by which an individual’s “true nature (*zhēnxìng*)” is obscured begins at birth:

From the time of conception by their parents to the moment of birth, the energy of ordinary human beings (*fánrén*) is complete and full. But following birth, the inner Truth gets confused by the seven passions and the six desires, while outwardly, their bodies toil among the myriad *karmas* (*wànyuán*) and the myriad affairs (*wànshì*). They mistake the false (*jiǎ*) for the true (*zhēn*), the negative (*xié*) for the positive (*zhèng*), and misery for pleasure. They give in to their desires, and let themselves be led to every conceivable place. The three original treasures (*běnlái sānbǎo*) of vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) are consumed and dissipated to almost nothing. The whole and bright (*yuánmíng*) true nature (*zhēnxìng*) that they originally had is now completely obscured, and they do not cease until they die. So life after life, death after death, for aeons (S. *kalpas*) of time, they are sunk deep. This is called running towards death without ever being summoned by *Yánwáng* (king of the dead).

Líu Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

Generally, an individual mistakes his personality or “temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*)” for his real self or “true nature (*zhēnxìng*)”:

Ignorant human beings unknowingly mistake their temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) for their true nature (*zhēnxìng*). This is incorrect. Their true nature (*zhēnxìng*) is the nature (*xìng*) decreed by heaven (*tiānmìng*). It is inherent, and is beneficial to human beings. The temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) is the nature (*xìng*) of human life (*rénshēng*); acquired after birth, it harms human beings. How can the acquired nature (*hòutiān zhī xìng*) be identified with the inherent nature (*xiāntiān zhī xìng*)?

Líu Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

All the negative aspects of mind are contained within the “human mind (*rénxīn*)”. When the human mind is purified, it becomes the “mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*)”. Then one’s “true nature” is automatically revealed:

If you remain alert and vigilant, nipping the smallest evil in the bud, then the human mind (*rénxīn*) is automatically diminished, and the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) automatically comes to the fore. Your temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) automatically dissolves, and your true nature (*zhēnxìng*) automatically manifests. Then you return to being the original (*dāngnián*), empty (*xū*), unobscured (*bùmèi*), spiritual consciousness (*líng*) – full and complete, bright and radiant, clean and naked, bare and untrammelled.

Líu Yīmíng, Kǒngyì (35) chǎnzhēn, Dàxiàng zhuàn, ZW246

Master Liú Yīmíng says that this understanding concerning one's true or real nature is found in Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as Daoism:

This nature (*xìng*) is called the 'Great Ultimate (*tàijí*)' by Confucians, 'complete awareness (*yuánjué*)' by Buddhists, and the 'gold elixir (*jīndān*)' by Daoists. Although these are three different names, they are in essence the same one thing. Confucians cultivate it to become sages (*shèng*); Buddhists cultivate it to become *buddhas* (*fó*); Daoists cultivate it to become immortals (*xiān*). All saints (*shèngrén*) of the three teachings consider the original true nature (*běnlái zhēnxìng*) to be the basis of attaining the *Dào*.

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

Human beings are generally confused about the real nature of their true self or identity. The twentieth-century writer Lǐ Lèqíu, in a book of recorded interviews with practising Daoists, quotes a certain Fù Huà Yī, who says that "original nature (*běnxìng*)" is one of "three selves (*sānwǒ*)", the other two being the body and the "essential spirit (*jīngshén*)". Of these, the original nature is the real self:

The purpose of practising the *Dào* is to cultivate the three selves (*sānwǒ*).

The first self is the physical body (*ròutǐ*). Although this self is false, it is the means by which the *Dào* can be attained. Therefore, when inactive, it is best to remain calm and detached. Action is best cultivated through exercise – whether *tǔnà* (breathing exercises), *dǎoyīn* (exercises with energy balancing), *yìjīn jīng* (breathing and bodily exercises), or *tàijíquán* (meditational exercises) – all are fine.

The second self is the essential spirit (*jīngshén*). It is cultivated by sitting in meditation (*jìngzuò*), and refining the body – which is filled with a diverse mix of *yīn* and *yáng* – into a (spiritual) body that is centred (*zhōng*), harmonious (*hé*), clear (*qīng*), and still (*jìng*); and, whether busy or resting, sitting or sleeping, by holding fast to the Limitless (*wújí*), which is also called the Ultimate beyond Nothingness (*wúwú zhìshàng*).

The third self is the original nature (*běnxìng*). It is true emptiness (*zhēnkōng*) – no more no less, neither defiled nor pure. Yet true emptiness (*zhēnkōng*) is not empty. When the mind is clear, the (true) nature (*xìng*) is revealed. Then you are aware of your original face (*běnlái miànmù*) that is the inherent (*xiāntiān*) and true master (*zhēnzǎi*).

All Buddhist texts and Daoist scriptures say the same thing – that all living beings come from the same Source, which is where we must return to discover our true nature (*běnxìng*).

Fù Huà Yī, in *Fāngdào yǔlù*, FYL p.231

To the discussion regarding the true and false self, master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) adds:

To be unconscious of your true nature (*běnxìng*) is to be trapped in appearances and illusions.

Zhāng Bóduān, Wúzhēn piān, Preface, DZ263

In his biography of master Lǐ Qīngyún, who was popularly believed to have been at least 250 years of age when he died in 1933, Yáng Sēn says that this “original nature (*běnxìng*)” has its own natural wisdom. In fact, thinking of wisdom as difficult to attain is itself a hindrance to acquiring natural wisdom:

The mind is the vehicle of *Dào*. When it is absolutely still, *Dào* takes up residence there, and wisdom (*huì*) grows naturally (*zìshēng*). Wisdom (*huì*) arises from that which is inherent (*gùyǒu*) in your original nature (*běnxìng*), so it is called the inherent light (*tiānguāng*, light of heaven). It dims when the mind is scattered; it shines when the mind is still. Wisdom (*huì*) is light; the use of intellect (*zhì*) harms stillness. Do not exhibit your wisdom (*huì*), but let it grow – though it is difficult to let wisdom (*huì*) grow and not exhibit it.

Yáng Sēn, Èrbǎi wúshí suì rénruì shǐjì, ESRR

Master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) observes:

Wisdom (*huì*) arises from one’s original nature (*běnxìng*). . . . That is why it is called the inherent light (*tiānguāng*, light of heaven). It is simply due to greed (*tān*), attachment (*ài*), indulgence (*nì*), and confusion (*luàn*) that it has become dimmed and obscured.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 6, DZ1036 12a–b, JY213

The eighteenth-century hermit Yǎngzhēnzǐ uses the example of a puppet to explain how the physical body keeps on moving about. The one who manipulates the strings is the “true nature (*zhēnxìng*)”:

Look at a puppet dancing: its hands and feet move somewhat like a human being. Those who do not understand see the puppet and see its strings, but never realize that there is someone pulling the strings. The puppet can only move when someone pulls the strings. Should that person suddenly leave, then the puppet and the strings will still be there, but it cannot move. Is not the physical body (*xínghái*) of a human being like the puppet, its energy (*qì*) and blood (*xuè*) like the strings, and the true nature (*zhēnxìng*) like the puppeteer?

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241

See also: **dàoxìng** (▷1), **mìng**, **xìngmìng**.

1. *Dàojiào yìshū*, DZ1129 8:6b, in *DHK* p.356.

xǐng, jué, juéwù, qǐ, wù (C) *Lit.* to awaken, to be awake (*xǐng*); to feel awake or aware (*jué*); to enlighten, to awaken (*qǐ*); to apprehend, to comprehend, to become aware (*wù*); consciousness (*juéwù*); illumination, spiritual awakening; awakening to the spiritual truth from the slumber of spiritual ignorance; the awakening or enlightenment of realizing the *Dào*. *Qǐ* appears in terms such as *qǐdī* (to edify, enlightenment), *qǐshì* (enlightenment, revelation), and *qífā* (to enlighten, to explain and arouse interest, to inspire; inspiration).

Explaining the “mystery of the mysterious”, the *Scripture on the Three Pure Subtle Natures* (C18th) – a collection of sayings attributed to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) – describes the spontaneous and non-contriving nature of “inherent awareness (*xiānjué*)”, the original state, which is known by several other names:

Be still (*jìng*), be silent (*mò*), be natural (*zìrán*). Do not force things, otherwise you will lose the original state (*běnrán*). What is the original state? It is the (true) nature (*xìng*) of the mind.

Awareness (*jué*) of this (true) nature (*xìng*)
is called true awareness (*zhēnjué*).

Awareness of true awareness
is called positive awareness (*zhèngjué*).

Awareness of positive awareness
is called great awareness (*dàjué*).

Awareness of great awareness
is called inherent awareness (*xiānjué*).

It (this awareness) does not depend upon destiny or law; it is neither opinionated nor discriminating, neither limited nor egoistic. Follow its original truth, let it be natural, then you will reach the three skies above and the nine oceans below, and comprehend the no-beginning and no-end. How profound!

It is the mystery of the mysterious. Daoists call it the ‘wisdom of the saints (*shèngzhì*)’; Confucians call it ‘spiritual knowledge (*tōngshén*)’; Buddhists call it ‘enlightenment from stillness (*jìzhào*)’. These are all the same as true awareness (*zhēnjué*), positive awareness (*zhèngjué*), great awareness (*dàjué*), and inherent awareness (*xiānjué*).

Qīngwēi sānpǐn zhēnjīng, ZW225

Daoist sages encourage human beings to awaken to this spiritual reality. As Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, fl.C16th) writes:

Let the mortals of this world hasten and awaken (*xǐng*) –
sweeping away anxieties and stress,
cutting through the yellow grass.

Shuǐjīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (22) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM p.143

Grass turns yellow when it dies. “Cutting through the yellow grass” means to cut away attachment to all things worldly, which are a source of spiritual death, in order to make way for the fresh new grass of spiritual awakening.

Even though a person may not realize during his lifetime that this world is an illusion or “great dream”, he will realize it “after death”:

Consider a person who dreams he is a bird flying in the sky, or who dreams he is a fish immersed in a deep pond. During the dream, he is unaware (*bùzhī*) that he is dreaming; only on waking does he realize that it was a dream. Similarly, we take ‘now’ to be great wakefulness (*dàjué*), but after death we will realize that this ‘now’ was simply a great dream (*dàmèng*).

Huáinánzǐ 2, DZ1184

In a question-and-answer (*wèndá*) exchange, master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) says that the *Dào* is all-pervading, present in all visible things, but it is only by transcending the “outer manifestations of the *Dào*” that a seeker can awaken to its hidden depths:

Q. There is a Root that lies at the source of original nature (*xìng*). Does it have a name or is it nameless?

A. Both.

Q. If it is both, why then does the scripture say that the Nameless is at the root of the ten thousand things (*wànwù*)?¹ Why does it not say that it has a name?

A. The *Dào* is an expression for that which pervades all life. When something pervades all life, there are bound to be outer manifestations. Once there are such manifestations, one can name them. Therefore, one can attach names to the *Dào*, but none of these names will ever be truly permanent. Indeed, the *Dào* embodies all, wide and encompassing; its meaning is not limited to one name. Today, we use language (in the attempt) to dispel its engulfing obscurity. But language only highlights the gross outer manifestations of the *Dào*. It is only by transcending these that one can awaken (*wù*) to its wondrous depths.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Dàotǐ lùn, DZ1035 1b; cf. TEAK p.21

Elsewhere, master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn also points out the allure of the mind and its illusory projections:

The mind (*xīn*) is the master of the entire body (*yīshēn*)... When calm, the mind gives rise to wisdom (*huì*); when agitated, to confusion (*hūn*). Delightedly roaming in the realm of delusion (*huànjìng*, land of fantasy, fairyland), it mistakes delusion for reality, and greatly enjoys being in the midst of action. Who will awaken (*wù*) to see this as empty (*xū*) and wrong?

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 3, DZ1036 2b, JY213; cf. SSTK p.87

In one of his essays, the philosopher Wáng Wéiyī (C13th) concludes with an explanation that the attainment of *Dào* is dependent upon awakening to “true eternity”:

In spiritual practice,
to know the master of the self (*zhǔréngōng*) is paramount.
Without such knowledge,
all exercises are futile.
Awaken (*wù*) to the true eternity:
then you will attain the *Dào*.

Wáng Wéiyī, Míngdào piān, DZ273

In his *Vegetable Roots Discourses*, master Hóng Zichéng (C16th), speaking of himself, says that through meditation a seeker will “become aware (*jué*)” of the great Truth of which sages and spiritual teachers speak; and this will lead to the realization of “how difficult it is to escape delusion”:

Deep in the still of the night, I sit alone in contemplation (*guān*) of the mind (*xīn*). I become aware (*jué*) of the Truth that begins to reveal itself when delusions start to dissolve. Whenever this happens, I find it enormously intriguing and enchanting. But then, becoming aware (*jué*) of the revelation of the Truth and at the same time realizing how difficult it is to escape delusion, I find myself deeply ashamed.

Hóng Zichéng, Càigēntán 9, CGT

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) contrasts the experience of someone whose mind is rampant, with one who has risen above the mind and enjoys “sublime awareness (*jué*)”:

Ever since you acquired a human mind (*rénxīn*), you have been here one moment and there the next. You are not in control of yourself, and therefore your (true) self is not present (*zìbùzài*). You take a servant for the master and the master for a servant. How then can you be free

and unrestrained? Only when nothing about you is dependent on the mind can you be immovable and unwavering. That is (true) freedom (*zìzài*) – when you are free and in control of yourself. Myriad thoughts are annihilated; no *karmas* (*yuán*, causes) are created. Sublime awareness (*jué*) is radiant and complete, pervading within and without, encompassing all directions, near and far. This is to be (truly) free and unrestrained. This is the wondrous state of no-mind (*wúxīn*).

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

To realize one's original nature (*běnxìng*), it is necessary to retain a one-pointed focus on the spiritual ideal:

Those who desire the *Dào* should first steer clear of all side roads (*pángmén*) and deviant paths (*wàidào*), seeking intently the true and subtle awareness (*jué*) that has no physical form. Only then can their original nature (*běnxìng*) be restored.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

Unceasing vigilance and awareness is required:

Keep the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) constantly present; ward off danger, guard against risk, and be aware (*juéchá*) at all times. Then there will be no room for the human mind (*rénxīn*) to grow.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Liú Yīmíng also advises seekers to be earnest about their investigation concerning the Source of all being. Sages, he says, will only “open up and give all they have” when “they happen to meet those worthy ones who truly seek life.”² A true seeker must look for a teacher who can tell him what human life is all about:

Awareness (*wù*) is essential for (practising) *Dào*. Without awareness (*wù*), on what else can you stand? You must first seek the origin of your true nature (*xìng*) by individual practice, then seek the key to the home of life from a master (*shī*). . . . When you have complete knowledge of the workings of creation, then you can transcend the world, and from a human being can become a sage (*shèng*).

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

See also: **míng** (8.2), **xǐng**.

1. *Dàodé jīng* 1.
2. Liú Yīmíng, *Wùdào lù*, ZW268, DS18.

xìngmìng (C) *Lit.* nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*); true, real, innate or original nature (*xìng*) and true spiritual life (*mìng*); a term subject to a variety of translations, such as ‘essence (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*)’¹ and ‘spiritual capacity (*xìng*) and foundational vitality (*mìng*)’.²

The modern scholar and practising Daoist Louis Komjathy (b.1971) outlines the spread of meaning. In classical Daoism, *xìng* and *mìng* referred to one’s original, essential or innate nature and spiritual existence; but in the later inner alchemy (*nèidān*) tradition, the two terms were used in connection with an understanding of the subtle internal structure and energies of the body:

In some classical Daoist texts, the view that one’s own being is the *Dào* becomes expressed through the use of the terms ‘innate nature (*xìng*)’ and ‘life-destiny (*mìng*)’, with the latter also translated as ‘fate’. In a classical sense, these terms are often employed synonymously, as a kind of endowed capacity or ontological givenness. This stands in contrast to their more nuanced and technical use in the later tradition, especially in internal alchemy lineages, wherein *xìng* is associated with the heart-mind (*xīn*), spirit (*shén*) as well as divine capacities, while *mìng* is associated with the kidneys, vital essence (*jīng*) as well as foundational vitality and corporeality.

For members of the classical inner cultivation lineages, *xìng* and *mìng* designate the ground of one’s being, the *Dào* manifesting in/as/through one’s own embodied existence. On some level, they are ‘fate’ in the sense of one’s innate and personal capacities, and what one must do in order to have meaning, purpose, and fulfilment. On another level, they must be actualized or expressed as embodied being in the world. They are both given and actualized.

Louis Komjathy, Daoist Tradition, DTK pp.90–91

Speaking from the classical side of the *nèidān* tradition, Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) portrays the path of rediscovering one’s *xìngmìng* as cultivating contact with the “inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*) of the Void”; and he continues by saying that all the terms and metaphors that are used to describe this process all refer to this primary practice:

The way (*dào*) of *xìngmìng* begins and ends with cultivation of the inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*) of the Void (*xū*). There is nothing more. When you gather medicine (*cǎiyào*), you are gathering this. When you refine medicine (*liànyào*), you are refining this. When you restore the elixir (*huándān*), you are restoring this. When you free the elixir (*tuōdān*), you are freeing this. When you ingest the elixir (*fúdān*), you are ingesting this. When you develop the (spiritual) embryo (*jiétāi*), you are developing this.

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

Master Zhào Bichén (1860–1942) also equates *xìng* and *mìng* with establishing contact with the “true Energy (*zhēnqì*)” within through the practice of meditation:

After practising stillness and meditation for a long time, the true Energy (*zhēnqì*) within will become active. Then your original face (*běnlái miànmù*), which is the light of your (original) nature (*xìng*) will reveal itself. At that time, you will experience extraordinary serenity. Continue to concentrate your spirit (*shén*), to gather it together. This is the main purpose of nurturing your (true spiritual) life (*mìng*).

Zhào Bichén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872

Wáng Jiè (C14th) sees no difference between the essential meaning of the two terms. They both refer to the fact that spirit is the essence and primary reality of all human beings:

We human beings are alive (*shēng*) only because of the (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) within us. Our (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) is nothing but our (original) nature (*xìng*). Our (original) nature (*xìng*) is actually spirit (*shén*); our (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) is actually Energy (*qì*).

Wáng Jiè, Dào xuán piān 3, DZ1075

Liú Yīmíng also explains that this inherent spiritual life and true nature of a human being is distinct from “temperament” or human personality:

To make wine, you must use yeast; without yeast, there is no wine. To make gruel, you must use rice; without rice, there is no gruel. Yeast has the energy of wine in it, so that it can become wine. Rice is the essence of the grain, so it can become gruel. Each acts according to its own kind.

As I observe this, I realize that the *dào* (way, principle) of nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*) exhibit the same kind of relationship.

Nature (*xìng*) means the inherent nature (*tiānxìng*), not the temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*). It is the nature whereby the temperamental nature (*qìzhì zhī xìng*) is transformed. Life (*mìng*) means the inherent life (*tiānmìng*), not a long or a short lifespan. It is the life that has no span.

To cultivate nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*), those who cultivate Truth must seek the seed of nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*), obtain it, and cultivate it; then nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*) can be perfected. On the other hand, cultivation of anything other than this seed is harmful to nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*).

Externally, this seed is not some kind of metal, stone, herb, plant, sediment, or substance. Internally, this seed is not some kind of blood vessel, vital essence, life energy, or body fluid. Anything with

form or appearance is not of the same kind as nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*), and cannot be used to obtain and realize nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*).

You must understand that the true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*) of your nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*) is nothing other than the inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*) that arises from the Origin (*běnlái*). You are looking at it, but you do not see it. You are listening to it, but you do not hear it. You try to grasp it in your hands, but you do not hold it. It is to be found nowhere but within this very body (*yīshēn*). It is to be sought nowhere outside the body. It is neither apart from the body, nor attached to the body. It is within the undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*) and indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*), hidden in the realm of the silent Emptiness (*xūwú*). Internally, it is true emptiness (*zhēnkōng*). Externally, it is this amazing existence (*miàoyǒu*). It cannot be taught in words; it cannot be depicted by drawing or written with a pen. If we must draw an image, it would be a simple circle. If we must give it a name, then the Confucians call it the ‘Great Ultimate (*tàijí*)’; Buddhists call it ‘complete awareness (*yuánjué*)’; Daoists call it the ‘gold elixir (*jīndān*)’.

The Great Ultimate (*tàijí*), complete awareness (*yuánjué*), and gold elixir (*jīndān*) – although these are three different names, in essence they are the same one thing. This one thing is the true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*) of your nature (*xìng*) and life (*mìng*). To thoroughly investigate the principle is to thoroughly seek this true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*). The meaning of fully developing your (original) nature (*xìng*) is to realize fully this true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*). The meaning of attaining (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) is to attain this true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*).

Become aware of this true seed (*zhēnzhǒng*), cultivate it upwards (against the downward current of creation). Use it to cultivate your (original) nature (*xìng*), then your (original) nature (*xìng*) will become pure. Use it to cultivate your (true spiritual) life (*mìng*), then your (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) will become established. As the *Cāntóng qì* (‘Triplex Unity’) says: “It is easy to work with something of the same kind; impossible to work with something of a different kind, even for one of great skill.”³

This is like the necessity of yeast for making wine or of rice for making gruel.

Líu Yǐmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

See also: **mìng, xìng.**

1. Thomas Cleary, *e.g. Taoist Classics, TCC1–3 passim*.
2. Louis Komjathy, *e.g. Daoist Tradition, DTK passim*.
3. Wèi Bóyáng, *Cāntóng qì, DZ1007, JY141*.

xīnjié (C) *Lit.* mind (*xīn*) knot (*jié*); mental knot or entanglement; mental preoccupation, perplexity, or confusion; something that gnaws at and entangles the mind, hindering clear understanding of both mundane and spiritual affairs.

See also: **huò**.

xīnyuán (C) *Lit.* ape (*yuán*) mind (*xīn*); monkey mind. See **yuánxīn**.

xū (C) *Lit.* empty, vacant, space; emptiness, void. See **kōng**.

xuánzhū (C) *Lit.* mysterious (*xuán*) pearl (*zhū*); mystic pearl; a synonym for *jīndān* (gold elixir), which is used in *nèidān* (inner alchemy) for the inherent or original spiritual awareness present within all human beings.

The term appears in ‘Four Hundred Words on the Gold Elixir’, a poem attributed to master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th), in which he describes in symbolic language the moment when, at an advanced stage of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), the *shén* (spirit) is awakened:

The medicines produce the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*),
the firing process develops the *yáng* furnace.
When dragon and tiger meet and join,
the mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*) emerges from the gold crucible.

Zhāng Bóduān, Jīndān sībǎi zì, DZ1081

The “medicines” and the “firing process” are the spiritual practices and prerequisites of inner alchemy. These result in discovery of the *xuánqiào*, the “mysterious opening”, the meeting point of the material and spiritual realms. The “dragon and tiger” are *yīn* and *yáng*, the negative and positive aspects of duality, whose union (they “meet and join”) results in awakening of the inherent or original spirit, known as *xuánzhū* or *jīndān* (gold elixir). *Yīn* is also earth or the material world, and *yáng* is heaven or pure spirituality. The “gold crucible”, the vessel in which the gold elixir is ‘produced’, is the human body.

The two traditional goals of medieval alchemy (*dān*) were to create the medicine or elixir of immortality and to concoct an elixir that would transmute base metal into gold. The terminology of outer alchemy was taken by the teachers and practitioners of inner alchemy (*nèidān*) as a family of metaphors for the transformation of a human being into a spiritual being. Thus, for instance, bodily immortality was understood as the immortality of the spirit, the mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*) and the gold elixir (*jīndān*) as the essential spiritual consciousness within that needs to be revealed, manifested, or developed. Hence, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains the meaning of *xuánzhū*:

The mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*) is another name for the gold elixir (*jīndān*). Because the drop of gold elixir (*jīndān*) is round and bright, it is symbolized as a pearl (*zhū*). And, since its spiritual subtlety is difficult to describe in words, it is also symbolized as a mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*).

Liú Yīmíng, Jīndān sìbǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

Master Liú Yīmíng also composed a poem which he describes as providing Zhāng Bódūān's "real meaning (*zhēnyì*)":

When true consciousness (*zhēnlíng*)
is realized in the mysterious opening (*yuánqiào*),
then is the optimum time to set to work and cultivate.
When human nature (*xìng*) and innate nature (*qíng*) are intertwined,
the ingredients of the great elixir (*dān*) can develop.

Liú Yīmíng, Zhùshū sìbǎi zì zhēnyì gē 6, in Jīndān sìbǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

In his commentary on Zhāng Bódūān's *Chapters on Awakening to Perfection*, master Liú Yīmíng further explains that once this awareness dawns, it goes on growing:

The mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*) is the pearl (*zhū*) of ultimate *yáng* (i.e. spirituality). It is complete, luminous, and unobscured. It is another name for the gold elixir (*jīndān*). It is the original nature (*běnxìng*) of true consciousness (*liángzhī*) and the true potential that human beings have always possessed. This original nature is silent and still, its perception unimpeded and universally penetrating. Its form is symbolized as a mysterious pearl (*xuánzhū*). This pearl (*zhū*) is formed by accumulation of positive energies from one drop of strong and firm true knowledge in the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*). It then grows and grows until its positive energy is all-pervading – its shining light complete and full as the ultimate *yáng*.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

Master Liú Yīmíng then goes on to explain the higher stages attained as a devotee continues the spiritual practice leading to final union with the *Dào*.

See also: **dān**.

yángshén (C) *Lit.* light (*yáng*) spirit (*shén*); radiant spirit, luminous spirit; in Daoism, the original state of being that exists without beginning or end, which lies latent in every human being, rediscovery of which brings immortality;

used more or less synonymously with *yuánshén* (original spirit), *zhēnxìng* (real or true nature), and *shēnwài shēn* (body beyond the body).

Yángshén is the eternal spirit that transcends the physical, and is realized by intense spiritual practice. After taking birth, the *yángshén* descends to lower bodily centres, scattering throughout the body and into the material world. Its original quality of *yáng* – radiant and luminous, positive and pure – becomes obscured, incomplete, and latent. The purpose of Daoist spiritual practice is to bring the scattered spirit back to its centre and hold it there until it recovers its original state.

Daoists anticipate the happiness of eternal life. Knowing that physical life is sure to end sooner or later, they seek spiritual immortality by working to recover their innate *yángshén*. Furthermore, they understand that, through meditation and the spiritual practice of refining the spirit, it is possible for the *yángshén* to rise to spiritual realms even during their human lifetime. According to master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th):

To reveal the light spirit (*yángshén*),
refine (*liàn*) the light spirit (*yángshén*).
Ascend beyond the realm of form (*sèjiè*)
into the realm of the formless (*wùsèjiè*).

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

This process does not occur easily, however, because the murkiness of the worldly mind, which has been conditioned by the senses and material existence, needs to be cleared. Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) quotes Yú Qīngfēng, who says that until the cultivator of *Dào* has attained a state of complete stillness and emptiness of mind, realization of the *yángshén* is not possible:

Yú Qīngfēng says, “Until true emptiness (*kōng*) is achieved, the light spirit (*yángshén*) will not be revealed.”

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

The *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition and the *Quánzhēn* school in particular maintain that the *yángshén* is rediscovered through mastery, not only of the mind, but also of the physical body and its subtle energies. As a result of these practices, an advanced adept can manifest his *yángshén* at will to others – either in visions or dreams, or in a clearly visible corporeal form. A present-day Daoist explains:

As the adept becomes more alchemically transformed, he or she becomes less physical and more numinous (spiritual) in appearance and in nature.

Louis Komjathy, Cultivating Perfection, CPMS p.244

The complete freedom and full power of this immortal *yángshén* can only be regained by proper spiritual practice. When the *yángshén* is finally liberated, the practitioner is no longer trapped in the physical body:

The emergence of the light spirit (*yángshén*) from the covering (*qiào*, i.e. the body) is referred to as ‘shedding one’s body (*tuōtāi*)’.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

Daoist writings contain descriptions of Daoist masters who have appeared to people in a visible, *yángshén* form, regardless of where the people were and whether they were awake, dreaming, or in meditation.¹

See also: **fǎshēn** (►1), **yīlíng**, **zhēnxìng**.

1. See **mèngjiàn** (7.2), **xiàn** (7.2).

yaqīn (A/P) *Lit.* certitude, certainty; firm faith, intuitive certainty; mystically, the certainty that comes with direct, personal, mystical experience:

To the *ṣūfīs*, *yaqīn* is a firm faith and confidence in the heart, which will not be eradicated by any doubt.

Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī says: “What the physical eyes see is called knowledge (*‘ilm*); what the inner eye sees is called *yaqīn*.”

Al-Qāshānī, Sharḥ-i Manāzil al-Sā’rīn, SMSQ p.115, in FLI pp.804–5

With dwellers of the Truth, *yaqīn* is perceiving the obvious (God) by the power of faith, not logic and reasoning. *Yaqīn* is beholding the Unseen through purity of heart, and perceiving mysteries by controlling thoughts.

Jurjānī, Ta’rīfāt, KTJ p.232

Sufi systematizers distinguished three degrees of certainty (*yaqīn*):

1. *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*. *Lit.* knowledge of certainty; theoretical knowledge or doctrine, resulting from intellectual proof and demonstration of whatever has been conceptualized; implied or secondary knowledge.
2. *‘Ayn al-yaqīn*. *Lit.* eye of certainty, intuitive certainty; direct knowledge through actual experience of the subject of knowledge; usually applied to mystic revelation (*shuhūd*, witnessing, visionary contemplation).
3. *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. *Lit.* truth of certainty, realization of certainty; the certainty arising from possession of the mystic Truth (*Ḥaqq*) by those who have reached the highest goal of the spiritual path.

All three expressions appear in the *Qur'ān* in reference to the assertion of certainty that unbelievers will have to experience hellfire.¹ Sufis have used the metaphor of fire to explain the relative meaning of the terms in a mystical sense. Rūmī says:

If your knowledge (*'ilm*) of fire
has been turned to certainty (*yaqīn*) by words,
seek to be cooked (by the fire itself):
Dwell not in the certainty of knowledge derived from others.
There is no eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) until you burn:
if you desire this certainty (*yaqīn*), sit down in the fire!
Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:860–61; cf. MJR2 p.266

Other Sufi poets have commonly spoken of this mystic certitude:

O You who are so apparent!
Since 'Aṭṭār found You through the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*),
why should he seek You through others with his outer eye?
'Aṭṭār, Dīvān 138:3168, DASN p.173; cf. in SSE3 p.175

When the mystics (*'ārifān*) apply (to their eyes),
collyrium from the light (*anwār*) of certitude (*yaqīn*),
every moment they see the Friend in everything.
'Irāqī, Kullīyāt 200, KHI p.75; cf. in SSE3 p.173

Speaking of the mystics as those who “burnish their hearts”, Rūmī writes:

They have relinquished the form and husk of knowledge:
they have raised the banner of the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*)....
They have let go of grammar (*naḥw*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*),
and have taken up mystical self-effacement (*maḥw*)
and spiritual poverty (*faqr*) instead.
Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3493, 3497; cf. MJR2 p.190

See also: **'ilm**, **ẓann**.

1. *'Ilm al-yaqīn*: *Qur'ān* 102:5; *'ayn al-yaqīn*: *Qur'ān* 102:7; *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*: *Qur'ān* 56:95.

yeḥidah (He) *Lit.* oneness, singularity; in kabbalistic and Hasidic teachings, the highest of the five levels of the soul, the state of pre-existing union with God. The other four levels of the soul are, from highest to lowest: *ḥayyah* (life), *neshamah* (breath, immortal soul), *ruaḥ* (spirit, breath), and *nefesh* (vital

force). These five levels of soul cannot be accurately translated into English, since they represent stages of the one soul, descending from the higher aspects of the soul to *ruah* and *nefesh*, the spirit and vital force within the physical body. In this scheme of things, mind would be included as a lower aspect of soul. *Yehidah* represents the soul in union with the Divine – a state in which the soul knows that it is God, and that God is the only true reality.

The *Habad-Lubavitch* Hasidic *rebbe*, Menaḥem Schneerson, writes that *yehidah* is the essence of the messiah, the soul, and the creation – the oneness that flows throughout the entire chain of being, through all realms of creation.¹

See also: **yihud, yihudim** (8.5).

1. Menaḥem Schneerson, *On the Essence of Chassidus*, ECMS pp.41–43.

yeshu'a, yesha, teshu'a (He) *Lit.* salvation, deliverance; salvation from death or extreme danger; salvation or deliverance from physical enemies in time of war. Sometimes the terms *pelitah* and *pallet* (escape, deliverance) are also used.

The Hebrew Bible generally speaks of salvation on a national as well as individual level, mainly as deliverance from enemies and salvation from death or danger. Early Judaism did not teach that human beings are born in a state of sin and need to be 'saved' from a state of sinfulness, nor does mainstream Judaism today. The concept of spiritual salvation from the 'original sin' of Adam in the Garden of Eden was introduced into Christianity by St Paul in his letter to the Romans.¹ The Hebrew Bible teaches that people should do good deeds and obey the *Torah* (the teachings, the commandments of the scriptures), and thus be 'inscribed in the Book of Life'.

The "Book of Life" is a biblical myth or metaphor. In psalm 69, the psalmist curses his oppressors: "Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the righteous."² There is also a related passage in *Isaiah*: "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem."³ The idea seems to have been based on a belief in the existence of heavenly ledgers that record people's good and bad deeds, as well as their destiny, a belief that can be traced back to Babylonian and Mesopotamian religion. A later source of the myth was probably the *Mishnah* (the first part of the *Talmud*), where Rabbi Akiva speaks of a heavenly ledger in which people's actions are written until the Day of Judgment.⁴ According to the *Babylonian Talmud*:

Three books are opened in heaven on *Rosh Hashanah* (the New Year), one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and

one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the Book of Life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the Book of Death. The doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement: if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the Book of Life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the Book of Death.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b, JCL

The Jewish conception of salvation or redemption is closely associated with the perceived destiny of the Israelites as the chosen ones of God, and fulfilment of a biblical covenant in which God promises Abraham that his progeny will become a vast people living in the Lord's will in the land of Canaan.⁵

Early Judaism contains little discussion of an afterlife. Even the notion of the resurrection of the dead, which became prevalent in some schools of Jewish thought from the second century BCE, was understood physically rather than as eternal life in a non-corporeal form. According to an apocalyptic revelation in the *Book of Daniel*, written around 165 BCE, the end of the world and the Day of Judgment will be accompanied by a physical resurrection of "those who lie sleeping in the dust". And although it is said that the good will be rewarded with "everlasting life", the nature of this life is not explained:

At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book (of Life). Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. And they that are wise will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity. But you, Daniel, must keep these words secret and the book sealed until the time of the End. Many will wander this way and that, and wickedness will go on increasing.

Daniel 12:1–4; cf. JB, KJV

For the most part, the destiny of the Jewish people was envisioned through their identity as a people living in the "promised" land granted to them by God.⁶ To this imagery was added the notion of the messiah. Messiah (He. *mashi'ah*) means 'anointed one'; and the king, the high priest, and the prophet were all ritually anointed ones. From the first century BCE, after the Jewish kingdoms had been overthrown by Rome, salvation was understood as the Israelites' restoration to the holy land through the agency of a messianic figure – a holy king who would lead them to freedom from the oppression of the conquering power. The Israelites' slavery in Egypt, their rescue by God

through the agency of Moses, and their eventual settlement in the holy land, has remained the primary motif in the Jewish concept of salvation.

Nevertheless, the longing to be restored to God's favour – a theme that flows through the writings of the biblical prophets – has continued through the centuries, and has been enlarged by Christian writers to include the human longing for divine protection and a place to dwell in the kingdom of God. The biblical story of deliverance from slavery has also been understood allegorically as the escape of the soul from the material world. Some of the gnostic texts from early Christian times, for instance, interpret the biblical story of escape from Egypt as the liberation and salvation of the soul from bondage to the material world.⁷

Some biblical passages certainly express the poignancy of the hope of what would seem to be a spiritual salvation and restoration to God's favour. They are a plea for refuge and grace in the loving arms of God:

Be gracious to me, O Lord;
Consider my trouble which I suffer from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death:
That I may relate all Your praise
in the gates of the daughter of Zion (Ziyyon):
I will rejoice in Your salvation (*yeshu'a*).

Psalms 9:14–15; cf. JCL

Likewise:

Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You:
and let such as love Your salvation (*yeshu'a*) say continually:
“Let God be magnified.
But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God:
You are my help and my Deliverer;
O Lord, make no tarrying.”

Psalms 70:4–5; cf. KJV

And in psalm 51, salvation (*yeshu'a*) is restored as the result of a pure heart and contact with the divine presence and holy spirit:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit (*ruah nakhon*) within me.
Cast me not away from Your presence,
and take not Your holy spirit (*ruah kodshakha*) from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation (*yeshu'a*),
and support me with a willing spirit (*ruah nedivah*).

Psalms 51:12–14; cf. KB

The biblical psalms also recount the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt,⁸ and from various other dangers, in a manner that lends itself to allegorical and spiritual interpretation. Psalm 32 uses the Hebrew term *pallet* (deliverance):

At last I admitted to You that I had sinned;
No longer concealing my guilt,
I said, "I will go to *Yahweh* and confess my fault."
And You, You have forgiven the wrong I did,
and have pardoned my sin.

That is why each of Your servants prays to You
in time of trouble;
Even if floods come rushing down,
they will never reach him.
You are a hiding place for me,
You guard me when in trouble,
You surround me with songs of deliverance (*pallet*).

Psalms 32:5–7; cf. JB

Other biblical passages are equally ambiguous. According to *Isaiah*, salvation for the Israelites (Israel) will be the return to Zion (Jerusalem). But whether Jerusalem is to be understood literally or metaphorically is uncertain:

Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, who are far from righteousness;
I bring near My righteousness, already it is close; and My salvation
(*teshu'a*) shall not be late. I will give salvation (*teshu'a*) to Zion
(*Ziyyon*) and My glory shall be for Israel.

Isaiah 46:12–13; cf. JB, KB

There are also several biblical references to the waters or springs of salvation – a passage in *Isaiah* could again refer either to deliverance from enemies in battle or to spiritual salvation:

Behold, God is my salvation (*yeshu'a*):
I will trust, and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and my song:
He also has become my salvation (*yeshu'a*);
Therefore with joy shall you draw water
from the Wells of Salvation (*Ma'ayanei ha-Yeshu'a*).

Isaiah 12:2–3, JCL

The *Thanksgiving Hymns* among the Dead Sea Scrolls also refer to salvation and deliverance. Given their spiritual and devotional tenor, they seem more likely to be referring to spiritual salvation than to deliverance from bodily harm. The unknown devotee writes that God has “hidden” His “Law” within him so that in the fullness of time, he may realize the divine salvation that follows the longing of the soul. He is delivered from the “den of lions” – an allusion to this world and its people, hinting at an allegorical interpretation of the story of Daniel, exiled in the land of Babylon:

For Thou, O God, hast sheltered me
 from the children of men,
 and hast hidden Thy Law (*Torah*) within me
 against the time when Thou shouldst reveal
 Thy salvation (*yeshu'a*) to me.
 For Thou hast not forsaken me
 in my soul's distress,
 and Thou hast heard my cry
 in the bitterness of my soul;
 And when I groaned,
 Thou didst consider my sorrowful complaint.
 Thou hast preserved the soul of the poor one
 in the den of lions,
 which sharpened their tongue like a sword.
 Thou hast closed up their teeth, O God,
 lest they rend the soul of the poor and needy.
 Thou hast made their tongue go back
 like a sword to its scabbard
 lest the soul of Thy servant be blotted out.

Thanksgiving Hymns 13:11–15, CDSV p.273

In another of these devotional hymns, the writer maintains that spirituality (“righteousness”) and the longing for it is in God’s hands, so that ultimately the soul may receive “eternal salvation (*yeshu'a*)”. Here it is clear that the meaning is of a spiritual, not material, salvation:

I know through the understanding which comes from Thee
 that righteousness is not in a hand of flesh,
 that man is not a master of his way,
 and that it is not in mortals to direct their step.
 I know that the inclination of every spirit
 is in Thy hand;
 Thou didst establish all its ways before ever creating it,
 and how can any man change Thy words?

Thou alone didst create the just
 and establish him from the womb
 for the time of goodwill,
 that he might hearken to Thy Covenant (*Brit*)
 and walk in all (Thy ways);
 And that Thou mightest show Thyself great to him
 in the multitude of Thy mercies,
 and enlarge his straitened soul to eternal salvation (*yesu'a*),
 to perpetual and unfailing peace,
 Thou wilt raise up his glory from among flesh.

Thanksgiving Hymns 7:15–20, CDSV pp.255–56

Belief in the “eternal salvation (*yesu'a*)” of the soul is closely associated with the notion of the soul’s immortality. The one is an integral aspect of the other, and a sense of this undying nature of the soul will always manifest itself among human beings. Historically, however, the concept of the immortal and essentially eternal nature of the soul is generally said to have entered Jewish thought through the influence of Hellenistic philosophy in the Mediterranean region as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), following which it gradually begins to make its appearance in Jewish literature.

In some cases, this appears simply as an understanding that the spirit or soul is separate from the body. According to the apocryphal *Jubilees* (c.C2nd BCE), for example, speaking of the messianic age to come, the “bones” of the “righteous . . . will rest in the earth, and their spirits will have much joy”.⁹ In other instances, there is full acceptance of the soul’s immortality. The *Wisdom of Solomon*, for example, written in Greek in Alexandria sometime around the beginning of the first millennium CE, maintains that “God created man to be immortal (Gk. *aphtharsia*),”¹⁰ and “righteousness is immortal (Gk. *athanatos*),”¹¹ and likewise that “the memorial of righteousness . . . is immortality (Gk. *athanasia*).”¹² Speaking of the creative power as Wisdom (*Sophia*), the author also assures the reader, “By means of her (Wisdom, *Sophia*) I shall obtain immortality (*athanasia*),”¹³ for, “To be allied to Wisdom (*Sophia*) is immortality (*athanasia*),”¹⁴ and, “To know Your power (*kratos*) is the root of immortality (*athanasia*).”¹⁵ In a passage that refers to a recent case in which some “righteous” people had been martyred in Antioch, the *Wisdom of Solomon* also says:

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God,
 no torment shall ever touch them.
 In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die,
 their going looked like a disaster,
 their leaving us, like annihilation;

But they are in peace.
 If they experienced punishment as men see it,
 their hope was rich with immortality (*athanasia*).

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–4; cf. JB

4 Maccabees (c.20–130 CE), which states its intention at the outset of championing “devout meditation (*logismos*)” as the best method of gaining self-control (*sōphrosynē*) and mastery of the passions,¹⁶ also speaks of the immortal nature of the soul. Like the *Wisdom of Solomon*, it maintains that those who face martyrdom have nothing to fear, because they “have received pure and immortal (*athanatos*) souls from God,”¹⁷ and “will have the prize of righteousness, and be with God.”¹⁸

Philo Judaeus, a first-century (CE) Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, in his many volumes of biblical interpretation, speaks of the body as the prison house of the immortal soul, which existed before it came to this world. The virtuous soul, says Philo, is liberated from the body at death, and returns to God, dwelling in eternal contemplation of Him. Philo regards this as the highest human destiny.¹⁹

Although in Jewish texts the state of immortal and eternal beatitude is rarely (if ever) termed ‘salvation’, there is no doubt that by the beginning of the first century (CE), the notion played a significant part in Jewish thought. On the other hand, the more traditional Pharisaic belief in the resurrection of the body did not countenance the idea of an immortal soul, and rabbinic belief of the time largely favoured the idea of the resurrection of the body and a messianic age to come against the immortality of a soul that could return to God. With the passage of time, through the Middle Ages and into modern times, Jewish philosophers and mystics have continued to entertain a mix of beliefs concerning the resurrection, salvation, and the immortality of the soul.²⁰

See also: **dying to live (in Judaism)** (8.3), **immortality of the soul** (5.1), **salvation**.

1. *Romans* 5:12ff.
2. *Psalms* 69:28, *KJV*.
3. *Isaiah* 4:3; cf. *KJV*.
4. *Babylonian Talmud*, *Mishnah Avot* 3:17, *JCL*.
5. *Genesis* 17:1–13.
6. *Exodus* 12:25.
7. *E.g. On the Soul* 136–37, *NHS21* pp.164–69, *passim*; *Robe of Glory*, *Acts of Thomas* 108–13, *AAA* pp.238–45, *ANT* pp.411–15, *HS* pp.10–31.
8. *Exodus* 1:1–15:21.
9. *Jubilees* 23:30–31, *BJGC* p.132.

10. *Wisdom of Solomon* 2:23, *JB*.
11. *Wisdom of Solomon* 1:15, *KJV*.
12. *Wisdom of Solomon* 4:1.
13. *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:13, *KJV*.
14. *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:17, *KJV*.
15. *Wisdom of Solomon* 15:3; cf. *KJV*.
16. *4 Maccabees* 1:1–3, 13:16.
17. *4 Maccabees* 18:23, *RSV*.
18. *4 Maccabees* 9:8; cf. *RSV*.
19. Philo Judaeus, *Allegorical Interpretation* 1:33, 3:14; *On the Creation of the World* 46–47; *Special Laws* 1:16; *Who is the Heir of Divine Things?* 38, 57.
20. See “immortality of the soul,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, *JE*.

yihud (He) *Lit.* union, unity, unification; a term used by the kabbalists and later *hasidim* either for union with God or for a spiritual exercise designed to bring about such a union. In modern Hebrew the word *yihud* implies the union of two opposites in which separate beings merge into one or enter into communion with each other, also suggesting their seclusion from the rest of the world; also, a meditative practice involving repetition (either in writing, orally, or mentally) of the transposed and permuted letters of the names of God, of angels, and of various biblical passages.

As a spiritual exercise, Rabbi Isaac Luria (C16th) of Safed in northern Israel gave instructions on how to perform a *yihud* to unify the opposing *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) of *Hokhmah* (wisdom) and *Binah* (understanding), as well as *Tiferet* and *Malkut*. These *sefirot* are called ‘opposing’ since one projects the ‘masculine’ or ‘positive’ energy, while the other embodies the ‘feminine’, receptive, or ‘negative’ energy. The result of such a *yihud* is the ‘unification’ of the name of God (*Yahweh*), with its dualistic qualities or *sefirot* now no longer opposing each other but in harmony. Hence it was said that the name of the Lord would be ‘unified’.

In the early Kabbalah, *yihud* was used by those who engaged in contemplation on the ten *sefirot* and their interrelationships to signify the union of the *sefirot* of *Tiferet* (Beauty) and *Malkut* (Kingship). The kabbalist Rabbi Joseph Karo of Safed (1488–1575) used *yihud* in the same sense as the Sufi *tawhīd* (union), referring to union in God by complete detachment from everything that is subject to time and duality.¹ Safed was at that time a centre of both Muslim and Jewish mysticism, and there was considerable interaction and mutual influence between Sufis and kabbalists.

The *hasidim* of the late eighteenth century used *yihud* to refer to the state of union of the soul with God, achieved by transcendence of the self and all aspects of differentiation and separation from Him. According to the Ba'al Shem Tov, the first mystic in the Hasidic line, *yihud* is accomplished

by *devekut* (cleaving to God, intense devotion) – transforming the ego (*ani*) into nothing (*ayin*). This state was understood to be slightly lower than that of *aḥdut* (union). *Aḥdut* implies not only transcending the self, but also becoming everything.

The *Ḥabad ḥasidim* described two levels of *yihud*: the lower and the upper. The lower *yihud* involved bringing the sense of that divine presence into one's daily life, through performance of the commandments and study of the *Torah*. The upper *yihud* involved transcending the senses, body, time and space, and experiencing oneness with the divine Source. For the *Ḥabad*, *yihud* ultimately involved the transcendence of opposites through equanimity (*hishtavut*), and union with the one Source from which they emanated.

The term is also used by Samuel ben Kalonymus of the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (C12th) to celebrate the 'non-dual' quality of God – that He is complete within Himself; that there is nothing outside of Him; that the Creator and created are one; that He is the true Reality, and that there is no reality outside of the spirit. Samuel ben Kalonymus sings of this unity in his *Shir ha-Yihud* ('Song of Unity'):²

Everything is in You
and You are in everything.
You fill everything
and You encompass it all;
When everything was created,
You were in everything;
Before everything was created,
You were everything.

Samuel ben Kalonymus, Shir ha-Yihud; cf. MTGS p.108

See also: **aḥdut**, **tawḥīd**, **yehidah**, **yihudim** (8.5).

1. See Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, *SEKI* p.159 (n.98).
2. Attributed by some scholars to Judah he-Ḥasid, son of Samuel ben Kalonymus.

yīlíng (C) *Lit.* one, single, whole (*yī*) spirit or awareness (*líng*); hence also, unified awareness, unified spirit; the spiritual essence manifesting as or through one's inner being; in Daoism, the single concentrated spiritual awareness that is eventually attained through cultivation of the *Dào*; also called *yángshén* (light spirit) and *shēnwài shēn* (body beyond the body). According to the *Jīnguān yùsuǒ jué* ('Secrets of the Gold Pass and Jade Lock'), "The unified spirit (*yīlíng*) is real; the four elements (*sìdà*, earth, water, fire, and air) of the body are unreal."¹

Lǐ Lèqíú's *Recorded Sayings from Enquiries into the Dào* is an anthology of discussions between himself and nearly one hundred practising Daoists, dating from 1949 onwards. In this book, he quotes Wú Zēnglín's advice not to focus on anything in particular inside, but rather simply to maintain "a subtle, unified consciousness (yīlíng)". The opening (qiào) he speaks about, also known as the mysterious opening (xuánqiào) and by many other names, is the meeting point between the material and spiritual realms:

When sitting in meditation (jìngzuò), if your focus is on the opening (qiào), progress will be slow. If your focus is not on the opening (qiào), progress will be rapid. However, if you do not focus on the opening (qiào), it is still necessary to maintain a subtle, unified consciousness (yīlíng). Otherwise, you will fall into insensible emptiness.

Wú Zēnglín, in *Fāngdào yǔlù*, FYL

The fourteenth-century Daoist master Chén Xūbái agrees with Wú Zēnglín and takes the discussion a little further:

When you maintain focus without focusing on anything, your true energy (zhēnxī) automatically becomes still, imperceptible, as though it were not there. Remaining mindful, holding nothing in mind, you will dwell in indiscernible profundity (yǎomíng), aware only of a single spiritual consciousness (yīlíng) centred in the vast emptiness. This is the director of creation and its transformations (zàohuà).

When the right moment comes, the subtle law will automatically reveal itself. Moving quietly, ascending silently, gently use your attention to still the energy and respond to the essential processes of creation and its transformations.

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán, DZ243 14a, JY211

In meditation, when the body is completely still and the mind is completely quiet, there comes a point of complete concentration, when the spiritual currents within the body are collected and unified. Yáng Dàoshēng quotes the thirteenth-century master Qiū Chǔjī (*aka.* Chángchūn) as saying:

This is simply the state of one single consciousness (yīlíng), with no aimless thoughts (zániàn), like an infant with no outgoing thoughts.

Qiū Chǔjī, in *Zhēnquán*, JY244, ZW373

The thirteenth-century master Lǐ Dàochún identifies this yīlíng with the one primordial Energy, the undifferentiated Dào as it was before the creation was manifested:

Q. What is the one inherent Energy (*xiāntiān yīqì*)?

A. It is the one single consciousness (*yīlíng*) before the separation of heaven and earth. It is the one tiny particle of true *yáng* (positivity, spirituality) in the body. Because it exists before heaven and earth, it is described as inherent (*xiāntiān*).

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

In a question-and-answer (*wèndá*) exchange, Zhào Dàokě asks his master Lǐ Dàochún to explain the symbolic representation of supreme Reality as the ‘gold pill (*jīndān*)’. Lǐ Dàochún identifies *jīndān* with *běnlái yīlíng* – the “one original consciousness”. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, medicines are often prepared as small spherical pills. In *nèidān* (inner alchemy), the spherical shape is taken as a symbol of wholeness or completeness:

Gold (*jīn*) symbolizes endurance and permanence; the pill (*dān*) symbolizes completeness. Buddhists call it ‘complete awareness (*yuánjué*)’; Confucians call it the ‘Great Ultimate (*tàijí*)’. There is no difference between the two; it is simply the same one original consciousness (*běnlái yīlíng*).

This original true nature (*běnlái zhēnxìng*) lasts forever (*yǒngjié*). It is enduring like gold (*jīn*), and whole like a pill (*dān*). The more it is refined, the brighter it becomes. Representing it by a circle, Buddhists call it ‘true Suchness (*zhēnrú*; S. *Tathatā*)’; Confucians call it ‘the Great Ultimate (*tàijí*)’; and we Daoists call it ‘the gold pill (*jīndān*)’. The names are different, but their essential meaning is the same.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

See also: **dān, shén** (5.1), **yángshén, zhēnxìng**.

1. *Jīnguān yùsuǒ jué*, DZ1156 3a; cf. in CPMS pp.484–85.

yì mǎ (C) *Lit.* wilful (*yì*) horse (*mǎ*); wild horse; a metaphor for the scattered and wayward mind that does not accept self-discipline. See **yuánxīn**.

yīng’ér (C) *Lit.* baby, infant; one of several metaphors used for the state of purity and simplicity that is regarded as the original condition or nature of a human being; childlike innocence, the pristine state of the primordial spirit, which becomes increasingly concealed as the worldly mind gains dominance over it.

The natural inclination of the spirit (*shén*) is to return to the *Dào*, which is its origin. Therefore, the work of a practitioner is to rediscover this original

state of purity, innocence, and simplicity. In so doing, he follows the law of nature and fulfils his spiritual potential as a human being. Daoist masters encourage disciples to be natural, teaching them how to return to their original state of childlike simplicity and innocence in which all things are naturally in harmony with the *Dào*.

It is said in the *Dàodé jīng* that this innocence of a babe (*yīng'ér*) is attained by giving undivided attention to Energy (*qì*). The term *qì* appears only three times in the *Dàodé jīng*,¹ where it refers either to the energy of bodily life or, in its cosmic form, to the one Energy (*yīqì*) or Energy of *Dào* (*dàoqì*) mentioned in later Daoist texts, which manifests creation out of the *Dào*. The *Dàodé jīng* speaks of this one Energy simply as the One (*yī*) that is manifested from the *Dào*, and from which the creation comes into existence. In chapter ten, *qì* is probably referring to this one Energy (*yīqì*):

When one gives undivided attention to Energy (*qì*) and completely submits to it, one becomes like a (tender) babe (*yīng'ér*).

Dàodé jīng 10; cf. *TTI* pp.53–54

The *Dàodé jīng* also contrasts the worldly minded with those who are attuned to the *Dào*. Daoist adepts who live in the world while being at one with the *Dào* can seem different from other people. Because they may display the simplicity and innocence of a child, they are sometimes regarded as simple, perhaps even ignorant:

The majority of human beings look pleased and satisfied,
as if enjoying a banquet, seated on a terrace in spring.
I alone seem to be lacking motivation –
like one who has no work to do.
I am like an infant (*yīng'ér*)
who has not yet smiled (*wèihái*, ‘not yet child’).
I look dejected and forlorn, as if I had no home to go to.

The majority of human beings all have sufficient and to spare,
I alone seem to have lost everything.
My mind is that of a stupid man,
I am in a state of chaos.
Ordinary men look bright and intelligent,
I alone seem to be lacking understanding, knowledge, or culture.
They look full of discrimination,
I alone am dull and confused.
I seem to be carried about as on the sea,
drifting as if I had nowhere to rest.

Everyone has his sphere of expertise,
 I alone seem dull and incapable,
 like a rude country bumpkin.
 I alone am different from others,
 and value drawing sustenance from the Mother (the *Dào*).

Dàodé jīng 20; cf. *TT1* pp.62–63

The “infant who has not yet smiled” refers metaphorically to the innocence and purity of a newborn babe, who has yet to develop awareness of his separate self and who still thinks he is one with his mother. But as the child grows, his mind is increasingly conditioned by worldly impressions, and he develops a sense of individual existence.

By virtue of spiritual and meditative practices, a Daoist adept harmonizes the ‘opposing forces’ of *yáng* (“maleness”, “white”, “glory”, spirituality) and *yīn* (“femaleness”, “black”, “hidden”, materiality) within himself, and purifies, clarifies and empties his mind so that he may remain in close and constant association with the *Dào*. According to the *Dàodé jīng* (c. C3rd BCE):

When you realize (*zhī*) your (inherent) greatness (*xióng*, ‘maleness’),
 while remaining (*shǒu*) in lowliness (*cí*, ‘femaleness’),
 you become the mountain stream (*xī*) of the world.
 When you become the mountain stream (*xī*) of the world,
 your eternal nature (*chángdé*) never departs.
 This is returning to the state of the infant (*yīng’ér*).

When you awaken (*zhī*) to the white (*bái*),
 while remaining (*shǒu*) in the black (*hēi*),
 you become an exemplar (*shì*) for the world.
 When you become an exemplar (*shì*) for the world,
 your eternal nature (*chángdé*) is always present.
 This is returning to the Limitless (*wújí*).

When you realize (*zhī*) the glory (*róng*) (of the inherent),
 while remaining (*shǒu*) within the hidden (*rǐ*),
 you become the valley (*gǔ*) of the world.
 When you become the valley (*gǔ*) of the world,
 your eternal nature (*chángdé*) never empties.
 This is returning to the Unmanifested (*pǔ*).

Dàodé jīng 28

The *Dàodé jīng* is using three images, all referring to the return to one’s original nature of pure awareness and pure spiritual potential. *Yīng’ér* (infant) epitomizes the innocence and simplicity of one’s original nature;

wújí (the Limitless, the primordial Nothingness) refers to the *Dào*, and hence to the boundlessness of one's original nature; and *pǔ* (the Unmanifested, *lit.* 'uncarved wood') alludes to the state of unmodified purity, spontaneity and simplicity of one's original nature, which nonetheless possesses unlimited potential.

As an aid to freeing the mind in order to focus attention on the spiritual, Daoist masters such as Wéi Jié (C6th) advise their disciples to nurture and value the purity and simplicity embodied in an infant:

A student of the *Dào* must know the condition of an infant (*yīng'ér*). He should value and nurture its inner nature of purity (*chún*) and simplicity (*pǔ*).

Wéi Jié, *Xīshēng jīng jízù*, DZ726 6:22, in *TMPS* p.184

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) builds on the analogy of the “original state, which is like that of an infant (*yīng'ér*)”, to discuss recovery of one's essential “innocence” – and why it is important to aspire to this condition:

A newborn babe (*yīng'ér*) does not distinguish or discriminate. It has no interest (*bùzhuó*) in alcohol, sex, wealth, or anger; has absolutely no family entanglements (*ēn ài*) to bind (*qiānbàn*) it; and has no knowledge of riches or poverty, stature or power. It is not bothered by fire or flood, war or conflict. It has no concept of self, of others, of the ten thousand things (*wànwù*), or of life. All is empty, nothing touches it. It is impartial and dispassionate. It is naturally pure (*chúnrán*) and innocent (*tiānzhēn*).

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of reversion and of restoration of life. If you can suddenly awaken and turn around, separate yourself from all things, live in the realm of no things and no forms, eradicate the impurities of previous incarnations, and clear away the habits of this life, let go of everything, remaining empty and void, pure (*qīng*) and still (*jìng*), then – even if the body is old – your (original) nature will be restored. Though you may appear weak externally, you will be really strong internally.

This is restoration of life and reversion to the original state (*běnmian*), which is like that of an infant (*yīng'ér*). Otherwise, when innocence (*tiānzhēn*) is lost, even if one is physically strong and as fat as a pig or an ox, of what use is it?

Liú Yīmíng, *Wùdào lù*, ZW268, DS18

See also: **pǔ, wúxīn (Daoism)**.

1. *Dàodé jīng* 10, 42, 55.

yīniàn sānqiān (C), **ichinen sanzen**, **ichinen mannen** (J) *Lit.* three thousand worlds (*sānqiān*) in a single (*yī*) thought (*niàn*); three thousand worlds (*sanzen*) in a single (*ichi*) moment of consciousness (*nen*); ten thousand years (*mannen*) in a single moment of consciousness (*ichinen*); a *Tiāntái* (J. *Tendai*) doctrine which maintains that every thought moment encompasses the whole of Reality, both in space and time, from one *kshaṇa* (S. an instant, a thought moment, the time occupied by a single thought) to the *trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra-lokadhātu* (three-thousand-million-world-entity, *i.e.* the largest conceivable universe). Ten thousand years (*mannen*) implies a limitless period of time, *i.e.* eternity.

The doctrine is a way of expressing the age-old esoteric maxim that the macrocosm is contained within the microcosm, that everything is contained within the part, that Reality is manifested in every tiny particle and in every infinitesimally small sliver of time. *Tiāntái* academics elaborated further possibilities of the concept. Spiritually, the notion was used to emphasize that everything is contained within the mind, which is the ground of exploration in all forms of meditation.¹

Zhìyǐ (538–597), traditionally regarded as the founder of the *Tiāntái* school and the first well-known teacher to diverge significantly from the Indian tradition, describes how all the worlds are contained at every moment within the “one mind”:

The one mind (*yīxīn*) is endowed with the ten worlds. At the same time, each of the ten worlds is endowed with all the others, so that one mind actually possesses one hundred worlds. Each of these worlds in turn possesses thirty realms, which means that in the one hundred worlds there are three thousand realms. The three thousand realms of existence are all possessed by the mind in a single moment of thought (*yīniàn xīn*).

Zhìyǐ, in Nichiren, Kanjin Honzonshō, T84 2692:272a7–10; cf. in SWNY p.150

Ichinen, as a single thought moment or moment of consciousness, is a term used in a number of contexts, and defined in a number of ways.² Its duration is said to extend from one to ninety *kshaṇas* (J. *setsuna*, an instant). Shinran Shōnin (1173–1263) writes in *Mattōshō* (‘Lamp for the Latter Ages’), a collection of pastoral letters, that one moment’s practice (*gyō no ichinen*) of reciting “*Namu Amida Butsu* (Homage to Amida Buddha)” and one moment of true faith (*shin no ichinen*) in the power of Amida Buddha to take the devotee to his blissful pure land after death are inextricably intertwined.³ *Ichinen* can also refer to intense meditation.

Ichinen fushō (non-arising of a single thought) is a state in which not even a single thought arises, in which no delusion is therefore present, *i.e.* the state of mind of a *buddha*, the state of enlightenment. In his *Shōbōgenzō*, Eihei Dōgen describes *ichinen fushō* as the desired state of mind in *zazen* (sitting meditation).⁴

See also: yīxīn.

1. See “yīnian sanqian,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. See “ichinen,” *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, JEDS.
3. Shinran Shōnin, *Lamp for the Latter Ages* 10–11, CWSH.
4. Eihei Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, *Kūge*, T82 2582:171c, SDT3 (43) p.19.

yīxīn (C), **isshin** (J), **ekachitta** (S) *Lit.* one (yī, *eka*) mind (*xīn*, *citta*); absolute mind; single-mindedness (*isshin*); in general, a one-pointed, focused or concentrated mind; complete focus on a single object, as in single-minded concentration on the Pure Land *mantra*, the *niànfó* (J. *nembutsu*); in the *Wéishì* (‘Consciousness Only’, J. *Yuishiki*, S. *Yogāchāra*) school, the most fundamental level of mind or consciousness, which gives rise to all material phenomena in accordance with the modifications determined by *karma*; in the *Tiāntái* (J. *Tendai*) school, the underlying ground of all being, including both its pure and impure aspects.¹ *Isshin* appears in expressions such as *sangai yui isshin*, which means ‘the three worlds (of desire, subtle form, and formlessness) are nothing but (*yui*) the mind’ and *sangai isshin* (three worlds, one mind).

From the *Tiāntái* perspective, everything in existence is a manifestation of Reality, even the impurities that keep beings captive in *saṃsāra* (transmigration). Hence, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are both Reality. As such, everything is a potential focus for meditation. Analysed philosophically, the *Madhyamaka* school, originally formulated by Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250), conceived of Reality as something static – phenomena are like waves on the ocean of Reality. This is known as the two-truths doctrine: seeing phenomena as waves that are neither real nor unreal is the relative or conventional truth; seeing everything as a manifestation of the ocean of Reality is the Absolute or Ultimate Truth. The *Tiāntái* viewpoint is that even phenomena are Reality if viewed aright. The distinction between the *Wéishì*, the *Tiāntái* and the *Madhyamaka* viewpoints, however, is of an academic nature – Reality and the way things are manifested or come into existence are beyond verbal description and analysis.

The one-mind doctrine has been the basis of much scholarly debate, with many Buddhist philosophers, ancient and modern, continuing the process of analysis, proliferating a variety of intellectual perspectives. Some of the more mystical texts have tried to unify the various theories by pointing out that they are all attempting to describe the same indescribable Reality. Hence, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, which takes the one-mind doctrine as central to its perspective, says that the peace of “extinction (*nirvāṇa*) is called the one mind (*yīxīn*), which is also known as the *tathāgata-garbha* (embryo of buddhahood).”² Likewise, the *Dàshéng qīxīnlùn* (‘Awakening of Faith in the *Mahāyāna*’) sees all Buddhist theories as unified in the notion of one mind

with two aspects. The first aspect is the absolute Reality of all things, which is termed ‘Suchness (*Tathatā*)’. The other is the relative mind that presents itself as this world, *i.e.* *saṃsāra*. Even so, the world of phenomena is founded in the Absolute, on Suchness, which the text identifies with the earlier *Mahāyāna* terms of *Dharmadhātu* (Dharma essence, world of Reality), *tathāgata-garbha*, *dharmakāya* (Dharma body, true form), and *běnjiué* (original enlightenment).

Following the same syncretic trend, in a commentary on the *Dàshéng qǐxìnlùn*, Fǎzàng (643–712) identifies the one mind as a combination of the *amala-vijñāna* (immaculate, immutable consciousness) and *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness, subject to impressions and modifications) of the nine-consciousness theory of the *Shèlùn zōng*, an early elaboration of the *Yogācāra* eight-consciousness doctrine.³

See also: **běnjiué**, **yīniàn sānqiān**.

1. See “one mind,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB.
2. *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, Addendum, X17 327:475b24.
3. For many of the details in this entry, see “yixin,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

yoganidrā (S/H) *Lit.* yoga sleep (*nidrā*); a state in which the body and brain sleep, but the consciousness is fully awake within. See **nidrā**.

yóu (C) *Lit.* to roam, to travel, to visit; a journey; used frequently in Daoist texts to describe mystical experiences during elevated states of consciousness in meditation, dreams, or visions.

Instances of mystical transcendence have been recorded in China since ancient times. Shamans (*wū*), for instance, are said to have had the power to pass through an invisible barrier between the physical and the non-physical worlds, travelling ‘underground’ in the netherworld. Among these was Dōngfāng Shuò (c.160–193), who wrote a guidebook based on his travels beneath the five sacred mountains of China.¹ This kind of inner journey to the netherworld has been ritualized, and some Daoist priests are believed capable of travelling to those realms in order to plead either for the release of ancestral spirits who are trapped there, or for the severance of bonds that may bind certain spirits to dark entities.

The spirit medium Yáng Xī (c.C4th CE) is said to have established contact not only with underworld rulers and spirits, but also with past spiritual leaders. They provided him with detailed descriptions of the organization and population of the other worlds (especially the heaven of the *Shàngqīng* school of Daoism), and also revealed certain methods of spirit travel and visualization.²

Travel to the heavens means journeying within the inner realms, progressing to ever-higher spiritual dimensions. Reports of this kind of travel in Chinese texts date back to at least the third century BCE.

When travelling within, time and space as they are understood in the physical world are viewed differently, as exemplified by a short story in the *Book of Master Liè*, a classic text of uncertain provenance. The “sorcerer” is evidently a shaman with some degree of spiritual power:

King Mù of Zhōu was visited by a strange man from the far west. The man was a sorcerer who could walk through fire and water, penetrate metal and stone, fly through air, and move mountains and rivers. King Mù was very impressed with the sorcerer’s powers and treated him like a god. He built a palace for him, sent him the finest foods in his kingdom, and provided him with the most talented and beautiful courtesans.

The sorcerer, however, was unimpressed by these gifts; he found the palace uncomfortable, the food displeasing, and the entertainers ugly, smelly, and uncultured. Seeing that his guest was dissatisfied, the king built another palace, grander than the previous one. He used the best wood and stone from his kingdom and employed the most skilful craftspeople to design and build it. The palace was a tower that reached up to the clouds and had a view of the most scenic mountains and valleys in the land. King Mù called it the ‘Tower in the Midst of the Sky’.

The king also gathered together the most beautiful and gentle young women in his kingdom. He provided them with the best jewellery and silks, sprinkled them with the most fragrant perfumes, and sent them to attend to the needs of the sorcerer. He called in the most talented musicians to perform the best music ever written. Every month he offered his guest expensive garments, and every morning served him delicacies.

The sorcerer was still dissatisfied; but seeing that the king had done his best, he grudgingly accepted the gifts.

Not long after, the sorcerer invited King Mù to travel (yóu) with him to his country in the west. Telling the king to close his eyes and hang onto his sleeve, he flew into the sky. When the king opened his eyes, he found himself in the sorcerer’s country. Entering the palace grounds, he saw that the buildings were decorated with silver and gold. Jade, pearls, and other precious jewels adorned the walls and windows.

The palace stood on a bed of clouds above the rain and storms. Everything the king saw, heard, and experienced was unknown in his world. It was then that King Mù realized that the gods must have enjoyed such luxuries in their heavenly palaces. Compared to this, his own palace appeared like a mean hovel.

King Mù said to himself, “I have never seen anything like this. I wouldn’t mind staying here for ten or twenty years.” His musing was interrupted by the sorcerer, who took him to visit (*yóu*) yet another realm.

This time, when King Mù arrived, he could see neither sun nor moon, mountains nor sea. Everywhere he looked, the light was so dazzling that all he could see was a kaleidoscope of colours that made him dizzy. The sounds he heard were eerie and strange, and soon his senses were disoriented. His body was shaking and his mind a blur. His insides felt queasy and he thought he was going to be sick. He quickly asked the sorcerer to get him out of there or he would go crazy. So the sorcerer gave the king a gentle push, and King Mù was back in his own palace.

When he opened his eyes, the king found himself sitting on his chair as if he had never left. The wine was still unfinished in his cup, and the food was still warm. His attendants were standing in the same positions as before. When he asked them what had happened, his attendants replied that he had sat in his chair and had closed his eyes briefly. King Mù was so shocked by this that it took him almost three months to recover from the whole experience.

Finally, he decided to ask the sorcerer what had really happened. His distinguished guest replied, “We travelled on a spiritual journey (*shényóu*) in which neither time passed nor our bodies moved. You experienced a world unknown to you while you were sitting in your own palace. But what difference is there between the heavenly palace and the palace you call home? (For both are unreal.) You were shocked and disoriented because you are accustomed to what you regard as permanent, and cannot understand being out of it for a while. Your reactions are the results of your mind playing tricks on you. Who can tell when and how fast one situation can change into another, and which one is real and which is not?”

Lièzǐ 3, DZ668; cf. *LTTG* pp.85–87

Daoist texts relate numerous such tales concerning the spiritual experiences and inner journeys to celestial regions of advanced practitioners and spiritual immortals (*xiān*). Many such experiences are described at length in ancient texts, written to provide inspiration and instruction concerning the beauty and joy that can be experienced beyond the physical realm. There is even a poetry genre concerned only with the wandering immortals, the first instance of which is found in the anthology *Chǔcí* (‘Songs of the South’), which originated during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE).

In *Yuǎnyóu* (‘Far-off Journey’), probably the best known poem in the *Chǔcí*, the poet-visionary describes his enjoyment of the freedom and ecstasy

of a magical and mystical journey. In this poem, the author Qū Yuán (C3rd BCE) echoes the sentiments of many spiritual practitioners when he expresses his yearning for the transcendent Reality of the immortals, and his longing to be free of the “mundane world”:

Saddened by the hardships of the mundane world,
 longing to rise up and journey to places far away (*yuǎnyóu*)! – ...
 Suddenly, my spirit took off, never to return –
 my body, like a withered tree, left behind, alone.

I look within – try to reassert my grip –
 seeking the place where the positive Energy (*zhèngqì*) arises:
 All vast, empty and tranquil, there is serenity.
 Quietly, in non-action (*wúwéi*), spontaneous Truth is found. ...

Oh, to follow the current of this Energy, rising ever upward –
 swift as the spirit, wondrous as a ghost!
 To see the world get hazy, look back from afar –
 all dazzling essence, flashing back and forth! ...

I meet with master Wáng and pause to speak with him –
 to enquire about the harmony and nature (*dé*)
 of this one Energy (*yīqì*).
 “The *Dào* can only be received,” he says,
 “it can never be given.
 So small that it has no within,
 so vast that it has no bounds. ...

“Let no hindrances persist inside your soul (*hún*),
 and it will come spontaneously (*zìrán*).
 Focus on the One (*yī*) and open up to the spirit (*shén*) –
 let them grow in you in the midnight hours.

“Wait for the *Dào* in emptiness –
 clear even of non-action.
 All living species rise from this:
 it is the gate of virtue.”

Having heard this precious teaching, I move on –
 arriving swiftly at my destination. ...
 Holding on to my sparkling soul (*pò*), I climb to the empyrean;
 Clinging to the floating clouds, I ride up further, higher. ...

Thus I go beyond the world, forget all about returning;
 My mind – completely unrestrained –
 pushes up and away, deep within,
 so full of joy and spontaneous delight.
 Oh, how joyful I am now,
 so perfectly happy! . . .

The phoenixes (*luán*) soar up, stay hovering above;
 The music swells ever higher, into infinity. . . .
 Going beyond non-action, I reach the Clarities (*qīng*, heavens) –
 become a neighbour of the Great Beginning (*tàichū*).

Qū Yuán, “Yuǎnyóu,” in Chǔcí; cf. TEAK pp.251–53, 257

Another depiction of inner travel is found in a poem written five to six hundred years later by the eccentric Daoist mystic Liú Líng (C3rd CE), one of the seven sages (or seven worthies) of the bamboo grove (*zhúlín qīxián*):

There is master Great Man (*dàrén*) –
 He takes heaven and earth as a single morning,
 a thousand years as one short moment.
 The sun and the moon are windows for him,
 the eight wilds (*i.e.* all places) are his garden.

He travels (*xíng*) without wheels or tracks,
 sojourns without house or hearth.
 He makes heaven his curtain and earth his seat,
 indulges in what he pleases. . . .

Utterly free from yearnings and worries –
 always happy and full in his contentment.
 Without ever moving, he becomes intoxicated.
 Then, with a start, he sobers up.

Listens quietly, but does not hear the rolling of thunder;
 Watches intently, but does not see towering Mount Tài.
 Unaware of the cold biting the flesh is he,
 unmoved by the afflictions of covetousness.

Looking down, he watches the myriad beings bustling about,
 like tiny pieces of duckweed afloat on the (rivers) Hàn and Jiāng.

Liú Líng, “Jiǔdé sòng,” in Wénxuǎn 47; cf. ECMK pp.105–6

An advanced adept, epitomized in the poem as “master Great Man (*dàrén*)”, is able to journey at will beyond the limitations of earthly life. He travels

beyond time and space, and enjoys the resulting intoxication of spiritual ecstasy. While still living in his body, he has the ability to travel to extraordinary inner regions and to have spiritual experiences of which most human beings have no conception.

In this state, he is impartial to the sights and sounds of the world, such as mountains and thunder – in the same way that he is unmindful of his own physical body and the many afflictions that beset it. From ‘above’, he ‘looks down on earth’, and watches people “bustling about” as they run hither and thither, bumping into each other like “tiny pieces of duckweed” that float on rivers.

In these spiritual excursions, the practitioner has freed the spirit (*shén*) from the concerns of this world through meditation techniques that include concentration and visualization. By ‘rising up’ and traversing the higher worlds, adepts reach the centre of *Dào*, and experience union with it.

Stories illustrating the differences between ordinary mortals and spiritually advanced adepts – epitomized by the sage (*shèngrén*), the great man (*dàrén*), the real person (*zhēnrén*), or the perfected person (*zhìrén*) – are to be found throughout Daoist literature.

The *Book of Master Wén* (c.200 BCE) depicts *Dào* as a ‘place’ characterized by “mystic profundity” and “great light”, to which spiritual adepts travel. It is the ultimate centre of all, the heart of all being; yet, it is both everywhere and nowhere, the perfect Nothingness and Emptiness beyond all known regions:

Those who respect the great sphere of heaven can walk to all corners of the great earth. Those who mirror the Great Clarity (*dàqīng*, heaven) see the great light. Those who maintain ultimate tranquillity dwell in the great hall. Those who travel to mystic profundity (*míngmíng*) have the same light as the sun and the moon, being formless and yet existing in form.

Therefore, true human beings (*zhēnrén*) place their trust in the spiritual (*líng*) height, and return to the place where all things begin. Their vision is in that of mystic profundity (*míngmíng*); their hearing that of soundlessness (*wúshēng*). Within the mystic profundity (*míngmíng*), there exists but one understanding. Within the silence (*jì*), there exists but one knowledge.

Wénzǐ 5, DZ746

In another poem, written by the legendary tenth-century master Chén Tuán (and contained in a thirteenth-century biographical compilation), the master describes his mystical journeys through the nine lower heavens known as the “nine palaces”:

Then my spirit leaves to ascend to the nine palaces above,
frolics in the azure sky.

With it, I step on emptiness as if on solid ground,
rise up as easily as falling down.

Imperceptibly, I float around with the gentle winds.

Whirling, I appear with the easy-going clouds;

Sitting in quietness,

I reach the purple realm of Mount Kūnlún (eternity);

With ease, I pass through auspicious places

and the grotto heavens (*dòngtiān*).

Chén Tuán, in Lìshì zhēnxiān tídao tōngjiàn, DZ296 10b; cf. TEAK pp.272–74

Whether these particular accounts are imaginary or based on actual experiences is difficult to tell, but they are similar to the accounts of mystics from other traditions. Mystics increasingly make the heavens, the inner spiritual realms, their home. Freeing themselves from bondage to the material world, they wander freely to the ‘far ends of the universe’. At first they take short trips; but, as they grow accustomed to travelling beyond the body, their journeys become longer and deeper.

See also: **wū** (7.1), **xiān** (7.1).

1. See **shèngdì** (8.4).

2. See Livia Kohn, *Cosmos and Community*, CCED pp.9–10.

yuánshén (C) *Lit.* original (*yuán*) spirit (*shén*); primary or primordial spirit; more or less synonymous with terms such as *yángshén* (light spirit), *zhēnxìng* (true nature), *běnxìng* (original nature), *běnlái miànmù* (original face), *shēnwài shēn* (body beyond the body), and so on.

In the terminology of the *Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ* (‘Secret of the Golden Flower’), the *yuánshén* is the self-existent *Dào* itself:

That which is naturally just so (*zìrán*) is called the *Dào*. The *Dào* is without name or form. It is the one Essence (*yīxìng*), the one primordial Spirit (*yuánshén*).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 1, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

The *yuánshén* is thus the eternal and immortal part of one’s being. All else is transient:

Compared to the (rest of) creation, human beings are like mayflies (which live only briefly). Compared to the great *Dào*, the creation is also a transient reflection. Only one’s original spirit (*yuánshén*) or true nature (*zhēnxìng*) transcend space and time. (Bodily) vital essence

(*jīng*) and life energy (*qì*) degenerate along with the rest of creation, but the original spirit (*yuánshén*) remains inherent and boundless. It is the beginning from which heaven and earth are created.

If a practitioner can preserve (*shǒu*) and protect (*hù*) his original spirit (*yuánshén*), his condition will transcend *yīn* and *yáng* (duality), rising beyond the three realms (*sānjiè*) until his (true) nature, which is called the original face (*běnlái miànmù*), is finally revealed.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 2, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) therefore speaks of “leaving the abode of the physical body by refining the original spirit (*yuánshén*) and returning to the Great Void (*tàixū*), not remaining in the physical body”.¹

Shuījīngzǐ (aka. Zhào Yīmíng, fl. C16th) points out that there is a difference between the primordial spirit (*yuánshén*) and the thinking spirit (*shíshén*, the thinking and knowing aspect of the human mind, intellect). The primordial spirit is pure and still (*qīngjìng*), inherently endowed with true knowledge or gnosis, while intellect disturbs the mind:

The primordial spirit (*yuánshén*) tends toward purity and stillness (*qīngjìng*); the thinking spirit (*shíshén*) tends toward action (*dòng*), and disturbs the human mind (*rénxīn*) so that it cannot be pure and still (*qīngjìng*). As this continues, the primordial spirit (*yuánshén*) is harmed, and a hundred illnesses arise.

Shuījīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (6) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM pp.36–37

Master Chén Yīngníng (C20th) adds:

The original spirit (*yuánshén*) in human beings does not change throughout aeons of experience. What changes is the thinking spirit (*shíshén*). The practice of refining the form (*liànxíng*) using true emptiness is gradually to remove the thinking spirit, so that the original spirit (*yuánshén*) is gradually revealed. It is like polishing a mirror: when the dirt is completely wiped away, a reflection appears. Then you will know that all knowledge (*zhī*) exists inherently in the original nature (*běnxìng*) of every human being, and that it is not external.

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù'èr nǚgōng nèidān cídìshī zhù, SBNN

Liú Yīmíng says that at the human level, the *shíshén* gives expression to the *yuánshén*; nonetheless, it is from the *yuánshén* that the *shíshén* derives its existence:

Regarding the spirit (*shén*), there is a difference between the original spirit (*yuánshén*) and the thinking spirit (*shíshén*). The thinking spirit (*shíshén*) scatters (awareness of) the *Dào*; the original spirit

(*yuánshén*) leads to attainment of the *Dào*. The thinking spirit (*shíshén*) is what carries worldly attachments (*gēnchén*, earthly roots) through *kalpas* (S. aeons), constantly creating illusions by means of the spiritual power (*líng*) of the original spirit (*yuánshén*), until your (original) nature (*xìng*) and (spiritual) life (*mìng*) are lost.

To practise the universal way (*dàfǎ*), you must let the original spirit (*yuánshén*) take control over the thinking spirit (*shíshén*). When the thinking spirit (*shíshén*) does not arise, the aberrant fire (*xiéhuǒ*) is extinguished, the true fire (*zhēnhuǒ*) arises, the unified energy (*héqì*) becomes whole, the processes of life (*shēngjī*) continue without interruption, and there is hope of attaining the universal *Dào* (*dàdào*).

Those who are ignorant of this misguidedly take the apparent (*zhāozhāo*) and bright (*línglíng*) thinking spirit (*shíshén*) for the original spirit (*yuánshén*). This is a mistake. The original spirit (*yuánshén*) is the ‘spirit of none other (*bùshén zhī shén*, independent of any other aspects of the spirit)’. Its spiritual power (*líng*) is the most true. Most powerful (*líng*) is its truth. The apparent (*zhāozhāo*) and bright (*línglíng*) spirit is the ‘spirit of spirits (*shén’ér shénzhě*, dependent on other aspects of the spirit)’. Although it has spiritual power (*líng*), it is also false. The spiritual power (*líng*) of the false is the seed of reincarnation (*lúnhuì*). An ancient immortal said, “That which has been the cause of birth and death (*shēngsǐběn*) for countless aeons (S. *kalpas*) – the ignorant call it the original human (*běnláirén*).” By ‘cause of birth and death’ he means the thinking spirit (*shíshén*).

Liu Yiming, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

And likewise:

Students, past and present, all take the apparent (*zhāozhāo*) and bright (*línglíng*) thinking spirit (*shíshén*) to be the original spirit (*yuánshén*) that arises from the Source (*běnlái*). They are therefore attached to the form of emptiness and all sorts of marvels and wonders, and grow old without attainment, with only death to look forward to. Little do they know that this (thinking) spirit is the acquired (*hòutiān*) spirit, not the inherent (*xiāntiān*) spirit.

The ‘spirit of none other (*bùshén zhī shén*)’ is the inherent spirit. It has neither form nor is it empty. It is the ultimate Void (*zhìwú*), yet contains ultimate Existence (*zhìyǒu*). It is the ultimate Emptiness (*zhìxū*), yet contains ultimate Fullness (*zhìshí*). Thus the ‘spirit of none other’ is actually the ultimate Spirit (*zhìshén*).

It is unfortunate that people of the world only think of the acquired spirit as spirit. Gladly they fall into the wheel of reincarnation (*lúnhuì*),

not realizing that the ‘spirit of none other’ can preserve their (original) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*). No wonder they let the myriad things steal their energy without their ever being aware of it.

Liú Yīmíng, Yīnfú jīng zhù, ZW255, DSI

In the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, *yuánshén* is also understood more specifically as the primordial aspect of the *shén* (spirit) that is present in the body. *Shén* is the higher of the three fundamental body energies, along with *jīng* (vital essence) and *qì* (subtle life energy). The centre of *jīng*, often called the ‘lower elixir field (*dāntián*)’, is described as being in the lower part of the abdomen. The centre for *qì*, the ‘middle elixir field’, is the heart area or above the diaphragm. The centre for *shén* is the head, the ‘upper elixir field’. When these three energies are scattered throughout the body, away from their respective centres, they are referred to as *jīng*, *qì*, and *shén*. When they are collected at their centres through spiritual practice, they are termed *yuánjīng*, *yuánqì* and *yuánshén*, where *yuán* (original) refers to the primordial, innate energies that pre-exist human existence. Put another way, the bodily *jīng*, *qì* and *shén* are reflections of their original or higher forms – *yuánjīng*, *yuánqì*, and *yuánshén*. When dispersed throughout the body, one’s nature is excitable and scattered. When stilled, it becomes calm, and one’s true or original nature (*yuánxìng*) is revealed.

The purpose of *nèidān* is to reverse the downward and outward dispersal of the three energies, to reinvigorate, nourish, refine, and reintegrate (‘transmute’ or ‘transform’) each energy into the next higher energy (or ‘preceding’ energy), to the point where the original unified spiritual energy is restored. The original spirit (*yuánshén*) then returns to its origin in the primal Emptiness (*xū, kōng*) or Void of the *Dào*.

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) writes that with persistent practice, the *yuánshén* gradually becomes manifest:

As the myriad thoughts dissolve, the mind becomes less distracted, and the original spirit (*yuánshén*) gradually reveals itself as self-existent, independent of past or future. The physical body (*xínghái*) can no longer obscure it. This is transcendental emancipation (*chāotuō*). In truth, it is simply a case of arresting and tying up the mind by means of refining the vital essence (*jīng*) and life energy (*qì*), and nurturing the profound subtlety of the original spirit (*yuánshén*).

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

See also: **huò, jìng, yángshén.**

1. Yáng Dàoshēng, *Zhēnquán*, JY244, ZW373.

yuánxīn, xīnyuán (C), **shinen** (J) *Lit.* ape (*yuán*) mind (*xīn*); more commonly translated as ‘monkey mind’; a metaphor used descriptively of a confused and agitated mind, which behaves like a monkey that is unable to remain still; as in the common expression *xīnyuányìmǎ* (monkey mind, wilful horse), which implies a mind that is capricious, agitated, hyperactive, and uncontrollable. Originally a Buddhist expression, the image was adopted into Daoism and has also become a popular Chinese and Japanese idiom.

In his classic *Chapters on Awakening to Perfection*, master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) emphasizes the importance of coming to grips with the monkey mind, so that one may bring it under control:

Thoroughly understand the mental machinations
of the monkey mind (*xīnyuán*).
Three thousand efforts it requires
to become the equal of heaven.
The dragon and tiger
must merge naturally in the crucible.
Why worry about your family
and attach yourself to wife and children?

Zhāng Bóduān, Wùzhēn piān, DZ263

To merge “the dragon and tiger” is a metaphor for the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) meditational practice of harmonizing *yīn* and *yáng* within the “crucible” of the body. Zhāng Bóduān is blaming the machinations of the mind for entanglement in worldly affairs, and points to this practice as a remedy for first controlling and then calming the mind. In this way, a householder can fulfil his responsibilities while remaining detached from them.

Employing similar imagery, Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, fl. C16th) counsels:

Lock up the monkey (*hóu*) and the ape (*yuán*),
so that they cannot run away;
Tame the wild horse (*yìmǎ*),
so that it cannot get out of control.
Grasp the opening of the gate (*juézhōng*),
and when cultivation is complete,
a ray of golden light (*jīnguāng*) will penetrate your entire being.

Shuǐjīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (5) *túzhù*, ZW77; cf. CSTM pp.31–32

The “gate” is the transition between the physical and the spiritual where a meditator focuses his attention. This gate is always open, but it appears to open when concentration at that ‘point’ is sufficiently developed and the mind is sufficiently pure.

When master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) asked his inner spiritual master Zhōnglí Quán (c.C3rd BCE) about the practice of *cúnxiǎng* (visualization and

imagination of the spirit within the body), the master is said to have replied that its purpose is to steady the incessantly active mind, which otherwise “jumps around like a monkey, with thoughts racing by like a horse”:

The method of *cúnxiǎng* during inner contemplation (*nèiguān*) and sitting and forgetting (*zuòwàng*) has been used by some sages of the past and present, but not by others. Considering that the mind, having no place to rest, jumps around like a monkey (*yuán*), with thoughts racing by like a horse (*mǎ*), and being fearful of losing determination through (being distracted by) things, the method of producing an image in the nothingness is to keep one’s ears from listening, keep one’s eyes from looking, keep one’s mind under control, and keep one’s thoughts calm. Visualizing (*cúnxiǎng*) something during inner contemplation (*nèiguān*) and sitting and forgetting (*zuòwàng*) is therefore absolutely necessary.

Zhōng-Lǚ chuándào jí, in *Xiūzhēn shíshū*, DZ263

Controlling the *xīnyuán* (monkey mind) and the *yìmǎ* (wilful horse) is a central theme in the narrative of the famous sixteenth-century Chinese novel *Xīyóujì* (‘Journey to the West’), which was inspired by the factual seventeen-year overland pilgrimage to India made by the Buddhist monk and translator Xuánzàng (c.602–664).

yuánxìng (C) *Lit.* original (*yuán*) nature (*xìng*); former, primary, or primordial nature; the essential or original nature of a human being, the recovery or realization of which is the primary focus of Daoist practice. See **xìng**.

yǔhuà (C) *Lit.* to change into (*huà*) feathers (*yǔ*); to transform into wings, transformation of wings; metaphorically, to become as light as a feather and ascend to heaven; in Daoism, a symbolic image that depicts the transformation of a materially oriented human being into a spiritual immortal (*xiān*); a term in use by at least the first century BCE – as, for instance, in the *Lièxiān zhuàn* (‘Biographies of Ranked Immortals’).

Many images of feathered immortals have been discovered, such as those on bronze mirrors from the Hàn dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE). In later mystical texts, *yǔhuà* denotes the metamorphosis of an ordinary mortal into a spiritual or celestial being.

The *Scripture on Inner Contemplation* (c.C9th), a treatise on attaining the *Dào* (*dédào*) by means of *nèiguān* (inner contemplation) – a Daoist adaptation of the Buddhist *vipassanā* (Pa. insight meditation) – says that the “transformation of wings” takes place when life and the *Dào* are brought into harmony:

Teaching people to cultivate the *Dào* means to instruct them in the cultivation of the mind. Instruct people to cultivate their minds and they are cultivating the *Dào*. The *Dào* cannot be seen, so one must rely on life itself to clarify it. Life is not eternal, so one must apply the *Dào* to preserve it. When life perishes, the *Dào* is lost. When the *Dào* is lost, life perishes. Only when life and the *Dào* are combined in harmony will there be long life and no death (*chángshēng bùsǐ*). Undergoing the transformation of wings (*yǔhuà*), one will then become a spiritual immortal (*xiān*). . . . By increasingly practising inner contemplation, life and the *Dào* will endure forever.

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 4a–b; cf. TMLT p.214

The *Sacred Treatise on the Great Mystery* (c.1200) asserts that the prerequisite for the “power to fly” is to have the necessary degree of lightness, achieved by transformation from material to spiritual being:

The *dào* (way) of transformation (*yǔhuà*) and becoming an immortal (*xiān*) lies in refinement (*liàn*) of the spirit (*shén*). The power to fly (*fēishēng*), leap, and effortlessly ascend comes from having a spiritual body (*shéntǐ*).

Tàixuán bǎodiǎn, DZ1034; cf. NEL (2:3.3) p.101

See also: **fēi**.

ẓann (A/P), **gumān** (P) *Lit.* opinion, conjecture, presumption, surmise, supposition, guess, fancy, suspicion. *Ẓann* is the opposite of real knowledge (*‘ilm-i taḥqīqī*) or certainty (*yaqīn*). In mystic terms, knowledge gained by means of logical proof, external evidence, or scriptural and doctrinal citations and assertions is not Truth but mere opinion (*ẓann*). The term appears in the *Qur’ān* in reference to those seeking to worship anything other than *Allāh*:

Most of them follow nothing but conjecture (*ẓann*):

but conjecture (*ẓann*) is no substitute for truth.

God is well aware of all they do. . . .

They follow nothing but conjecture (*ẓann*),
and do nothing but lie.

Qur’ān 10:36, 66; cf. AYA, KPA

Commenting on some similar verses, Ibn al-‘Arabī writes:

If anyone sets up in himself an object of worship which he worships by surmise (*ẓann*), not in certitude, that will avail him nothing against

God. God says, “They have no knowledge thereof; they follow only surmise (*ẓann*), and surmise (*ẓann*) avails naught against the Real.”¹ Concerning their worship, He says, “They follow only surmise (*ẓann*) and the caprice of their souls.”²

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:612.6, FMIA4 (4:280) p.361, SPK p.151

Because there is no certainty in opinion, it is fertile ground for doubt (*shakk*, *shubhah*), even among rational theologians:

Myriads of followers of external signs are cast into the abyss
by a single taint of doubt (*āsīb*).
For all their conformity and their drawing of evidence
from logical proofs, all their wings and wing feathers
depend on opinion (*ẓann*).
When the vile devil raises a doubt (*shubhah*) in their minds:
all these blind ones fall in headlong.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2125–27; cf. MJR2 p.115

Opinion, however, is at least in search of the Truth:

The level of *ẓann* has a limbo quality; it has a face towards knowledge and a face towards denial of knowledge. *Ẓann* is superior to doubt (*shakk*). It somehow leans towards knowledge. In this state, it is necessary to choose either good or bad, whereas in doubt (*shakk*), one cannot choose.

Shāh Nī‘mat Allāh Valī, Rasā’il, RNV4 p.217

Opinion is likened to the ineffective beating of the wings of a clumsy or crippled bird, flapping awkwardly in emulation of the knowledge required to reach its destination. *Ẓann* has also been portrayed as a bird with only one wing: a feeble instrument, struggling in the quest of mystic “certainty”:

O son, every opinion (*gumān*) is thirsting for certainty (*yaqīn*),
emulously flapping its wings (in search thereof).
When it attains to knowledge,
the wings become feet (on which to walk),
and its knowledge (*‘ilm*) begins to scent certainty (*yaqīn*).
For on this well-trodden path,
knowledge (*‘ilm*) is inferior to certainty (*yaqīn*),
but above opinion (*ẓann*).
Know that knowledge (*‘ilm*) is a seeker of certainty (*yaqīn*),
and certainty (*yaqīn*) is a seeker
of vision (*dīd*) and intuition (*‘iyān*). . . .

Spiritual vision (*dīd*) is immediately born of certainty (*yaqīn*),
just as fancy is born of opinion (*ẓann*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:4118–21, 4124; cf. MJR4 p.230

Rūmī also makes it clear that mystical experience is a way of knowing and experiencing that goes far beyond both opinion (*gumān*) and certainty (*yaqīn*):

I am higher than opinion (*gumān*) and certainty (*yaqīn*),
and my head is not to be turned aside by blame.
Since I tasted His sweetmeat,
I have become clear-eyed and able to see Him.
I step boldly when I go (to my spiritual) home:
I do not let my feet tremble, I do not walk like the blind.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:4126–28, MJR4 p.231

See also: ‘ilm, ‘ilm al-ladunnī, yaqīn.

1. *Qur’ān* 53:28.
2. *Qur’ān* 53:23.

zhànměng (C) *Lit.* grasshopper; a Chinese symbol for wisdom (*zhì*). See **zhì**.

zhēnxīn (C) *Lit.* true or real (*zhēn*) mind (*xīn*); in the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, the mind that is in tune with the *Dào*; used synonymously with *dàoxīn* (mind of *Dào*). See **dàoxīn**.

zhēnxìng (C) *Lit.* real (*zhēn*) nature (*xìng*); true nature; the essential or real nature of a human being, the recovery or realization of which is the primary focus of Daoist practice. See **xìng**.

zhēnzhī (C) *Lit.* true (*zhēn*) knowledge, real knowledge; mystical wisdom (*zhì*) or gnosis derived from direct perception gained in meditation. See **zhì**.

zhī (C) *Lit.* to know, to be aware, to comprehend, to understand, to realize; human knowledge, especially mundane or cognitive knowledge, as in expressions such as *zhīshí* (intellect, the capacity for intellectual understanding).

Daoists often differentiate between human knowledge and direct experience of Reality. Liú Yīmíng, for example, distinguishes *zhēnzhī* (true knowledge)

from *língzhī* (reflected knowledge). *Zhēnzhī* refers to the highest spiritual or mystical knowledge that arises from oneness with the *Dào*, while *língzhī* is the diffused reflection of *zhēnzhī* at all levels other than that of the *Dào* itself. Reflected knowledge therefore always has something in it of true knowledge. It can be inspired by true knowledge, and for a fully realized sage all lesser or reflected knowledge is imbued with the higher or true knowledge. The “one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)” refers to the inner ‘gateway’ between the material and the spiritual realms that leads to spiritual heights:

The great medicine of the gold elixir (*jīndān*) is inherent in everyone; it already exists in every house (*i.e.* body). If you meticulously study the true teaching, seek an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*), know the two medicinal (transformative, healing) elements of true knowledge (*zhēnzhī*) and reflected knowledge (*língzhī*), and find the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*), then, without let or hindrance, you will go straight to the other shore. In one day’s work, you will attain the illuminating elixir (*dān*) of pure *yáng*. Why wait three years or nine years?

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

Hence, Liú Yīmíng advises:

Let true knowledge (*zhēnzhī*) control reflected knowledge, and let reflected knowledge (*língzhī*) yield to true knowledge (*zhēnzhī*). Then true knowledge (*zhēnzhī*) and reflected knowledge (*língzhī*) will merge, and the elixir (awareness of one’s original nature) will be generated.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

See also: **dān, dào xīn, yào** (8.4).

zhì, zhìhuì, míng huì (C) *Lit.* wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, wit (*zhì*); clever, learned, discerning (*zhì*); intelligence, wisdom (*huì*); illumined, enlightened, brilliant, wise, intelligent, insight (*míng*); one of the five cardinal virtues of Confucianism and one of the four virtues of the Confucian philosopher Mèngzǐ (*aka.* Mencius, c.371–289 BCE); also appears in Buddhist expressions such as *dàzhìhuì* (great wisdom and intelligence), *miào zhìhuì* (wondrous wisdom and intelligence).

Zhì is used in Buddhism to translate the Sanskrit *jñāna* (knowledge, wisdom) and *prajñā* (wisdom, gnosis). *Zhìhuì* (wisdom and intelligence) and *míng huì* (illumined intelligence) are used especially for transcendent or mystical insight, gnosis, divine knowledge, or mystical perception that sees how things function from spiritual levels of consciousness.

Zhì is derived from *zhī* (human knowledge), but is not to be confused with *zhī*. There are also more than a few Chinese characters that are all transliterated in the Pinyin system as *zhì*. These include characters that mean ‘to govern’, ‘to record’, ‘intention’, *etc.*

As in other traditions, terms for knowledge and wisdom have a spread of meaning in Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, the meaning depending on the context. Where the intended meaning is unspecified, as is often the case, translations can also vary in their interpretation of particular instances, as with a passage from the *Dàodé jīng*:

He who knows (*zhī*) others is clever (*zhì*):
 he who knows (*zhī*) himself has insight (*míng*).
Dàodé jīng 33, TTCW pp.66–67

He who knows (*zhī*) others is learned (*zhì*):
 he who knows (*zhī*) himself is wise (*míng*).
Dàodé jīng 33, WLT p.176

Knowing (*zhī*) others is wisdom (*zhì*):
 knowing (*zhī*) the self is enlightenment (*míng*).
Dàodé jīng 33, TTCE p.35

Wisdom (*zhì*) is one of the five virtues of Confucian philosophy. As it says in *Essential Precepts of Master Redpine* (C4th):

Practise these virtues to become kind, friendly, reverent, withdrawing, and modest. They are humanity (*rén*), righteousness (*yì*), propriety (*lǐ*), wisdom (*zhì*), and truthfulness (*xìn*). Turn your back on them and become evil and obstinate, (subject to the five robbers of): greed and envy, killing and murder, aggression and violence, cheating and betrayal, deception and flattery.

Chísōngzǐ zhōngjiè jīng, DZ185 10a, CCED p.165

Each of the five virtues is associated with one the five elements (*wǔxíng*) of traditional Chinese philosophy. These ‘elements’ represent the phases of change through which all things pass, like the seasons of the year. During the course of Daoist spiritual practice, with the merging of *yīn* and *yáng*, the spirit rises above duality, the five elements merge into one, and the first four virtues come together in the one virtue of truthfulness.

Conversely, observes master Hóng Zichéng (C16th) in his *Vegetable Roots Discourses*, once negative traits are permitted entry to the mind, wisdom and intelligence are automatically dulled:

Once greed (*tān*) and selfness (*sī*) dominate a man's mind, his previously steel-like nature will become soft and weak; his intelligence (*zhì*) will become blocked and dulled (*hūn*); his benevolent nature will become vices; his pure spirit will become muddled (*wū*); and the virtue he has accumulated over a lifetime will be dissipated. That is why the ancients regarded “Be not covetous” as a precious precept for self-improvement. That is how they were able to cross over and transcend the material world.

Hóng Zichéng, Càigēntán 78, CGT, TRW p.78

The *Essential Precepts of Master Redpine* adds that the wisdom (*zhì*) of mystics or sages (*zhìzhě*, “those of great wisdom”) arises from within and encompasses far more than ordinary human knowledge:

Those of great wisdom (*zhìzhě*) understand the patterns of heaven and have insight (*míngchá*) into the principles of the earth. Without studying they know; without being taught they understand. Silently, they understand everything. They know the whys and wherefores, and distinguish wise men from foolish. Their minds are full of empathy and compassion, and they do not despise others. They recognize success and defeat (in good time), understand when to advance and when to withdraw, and distinguish clearly between life and death. People like these, though they may be poor, will in the end be rich; though for a time they may be humble, will be in the end be raised on high. Such are those of great wisdom (*zhìzhě*).

Chisōngzǐ zhōngjiè jīng, DZ185 11a; cf. CCED p.167

In Buddhism, *zhì* and *huì* are used synonymously for ‘wisdom’ as mystic insight or gnosis. In Daoism, awareness that the character for *zhì* (wisdom) is derived from the character for *zhī* (knowledge) often leads to a more careful distinction between human and mystical wisdom. Although human knowledge (*zhī*) can be fed by mystical wisdom, mystical wisdom (*zhì*) is derived from direct perception gained in meditation.¹

Master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th) says that “wisdom (*huì*)” is an innate aspect of one’s original nature (*běnxìng*):

The *Zhuāngzǐ* says: “From the abode of great peace and stillness (*dìng*) emanates the light of heaven (*tiānguāng*, the inherent light).”² This abode is the mind (*xīn*) itself. The light of heaven is wisdom (*huì*). The mind is the abode of *Dào*. When the mind is absolutely empty and still (*xūjìng*), the *Dào* enters and takes up residence, and wisdom (*huì*) grows. Wisdom (*huì*) arises from one’s original nature (*běnxìng*); it is not something human. Therefore, it is called the light of heaven.

Zhāng Sānfēng Tàijí liàndān mijué, JH19

Commenting on a verse from the eleventh-century Zhāng Bóduān's *Wùzhēn piān*, Liú Yīmíng observes that true mystical knowledge or wisdom rids the mind of erroneous perceptions:

To use the sword (*jiàn*) of wisdom (*huì*) to cut the jewel
is called the true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) of the *tathāgata*.

The sword of wisdom (*huìjiàn*) is the all-pervasive, true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) of a *tathāgata* (S. 'thus come one', a *buddha*). It is called the 'sword of wisdom (*huìjiàn*)' because true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) cuts through illusion and restores Truth. And because true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) is complete, bright, unobscured and ever present, it is called a 'jewel'. "To cut the jewel" does not mean to destroy it, but to collect and focus it so that its radiance does not spread outward. When considered (metaphorically) as a something, true knowledge is called a 'jewel'; when considered in terms of what it does, it is called the 'sword of wisdom (*huìjiàn*)'. But in reality the sword of wisdom (*huìjiàn*), the jewel and true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) are all the same, not three different things.

This true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) is not obtained by talking but by practising what you speak. Only by intense refinement can the Truth be obtained. If you do not practise what you speak, but only rely on talking and quick-witted (*jǐfēng*) repartee (*yīngbiàn*) as the means to see your (original) nature (*jiànxìng*), you will remain slumbering in darkness, and confused whenever confronted by circumstances. How can anything useful come of that? Therefore, when it says: "If you can use the sword of wisdom (*huìjiàn*) to cut the jewel, this is called the true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*) of a *tathāgata*." It means that perfection in word and deed is true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*). Quick-fire repartee is not true knowledge (*zhèngzhì*).

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

In his *Mysteries of the Dào*, master Wáng Jiè (C14th) similarly recommends relinquishing intellectual cleverness, if the wisdom of a sage is desired:

The sage (*shèngrén*) uses words to reveal the *Dào* and speak about the intangible. The learned person (*xiánrén*) uses words to describe the *Dào* and talk about the tangible. Words that are directed toward the intangible will reveal the principles of pre-creation. On the other hand, words that are directed toward the tangible will reveal the principles of post-creation. If the learned (*xiánrén*) person can dissociate himself from form, abandon intelligence (*zhì*), gather and focus the spirit within, and not be attached to structure, he will become a sage (*shèngrén*).

Wáng Jiè, Dàoxuán piān 51, DZ1075, NEL p.46

The eighteenth-century hermit Yǎngzhēnzǐ, in his *Anthology on Cultivation of Realization*, also distinguishes between mundane knowledge and spiritual wisdom:

Those who attained the Way (*Dào*) in olden times nurtured wisdom (*zhì*) by disengagement. When wisdom (*zhì*) develops, it has nothing to do with knowledge (*zhī*).

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241, TMED p.70

Liú Yīmíng also uses *zhì* for mundane cleverness and intelligence, the excessive use of which, he maintains, leads to an early demise. This implies both physical as well as spiritual death:

Turtles come to no harm when they hide in the mud. If they emerge from the mud, people catch them. Fish remain safe when they remain in deep water. If they surface, birds kill them.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) by which life (*shēng*) can be harmed or life can benefit.

Ordinary human beings (*fánrén*) are unable to benefit from life (*shēng*) because whenever they face death (*sǐdì*, take a birth that is destined for death), they do not conceal their (spiritual) light (*míng*) and nurture it within. Confidently relying on their own intellectual brilliance (*cōngmíng*), they use too much of their light on their talents and cleverness (*zhì*).

Intellectual brilliance (*cōngmíng*), talents and cleverness (*zhì*) scatter the mind (*fēnxīn*) and disturb (*luàn*) one's (original) nature (*xìng*) such that positive energy (*zhèngqì*) is consumed day by day and negative energy (*xiéqì*) grows day by day. The root of (spiritual) life (*mìnggēn*) is thus stirred and shaken. How then can they not die?

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

All in all, mystical wisdom arises from depth of spirit; and depth of spirit is developed by spiritual practice. Hence Chén Tuán (C12th) writes in his *Mirror of Auras*:

Within human beings, it is desirable for spirit (*shén*) to be deep,
undesirable for spirit to be shallow.

When spirit is deep, wisdom (*zhì*) will also be deep.

When spirit is shallow, wisdom (*zhì*) will also be shallow.

When spirit functions, it radiates through the eyes.

When spirit rests, it is gathered in the mind (*xīn*).

Chén Tuán, Fēngjiàn 7; cf. MALK p.239

See also: **jñāna**, **míng** (8.2), **pútí**.

1. Livia Kohn, *Seven Steps to the Tao*, SSTK pp.56–57.
2. *Zhuāngzǐ* 23.

zhōng, **píng**, **pínghéng** (C) *Lit.* middle, mean, centre (*zhōng*); within, inner; level, equal (*píng*) + weighing apparatus (*héng*); in Daoism, mental balance, equilibrium; a state of inner union, expressed outwardly as equipoise.

The Chinese character or pictogram *píng* depicts a set of scales. *Píng* also means ‘level ground’, and metaphorically ‘peace’, as in the title of the text *Tàipíng jīng* (‘Scripture on Peace and Tranquillity’). Maintaining mental, emotional and physical balance leads to a sense of peace with oneself and one’s surroundings.

According to the uncertain author of the *Zhōngyōng* (‘Doctrine of the Mean’), attributed to the only grandson of Confucius, the underlying human condition is one of equilibrium, but it is disturbed by emotions and passions:

When feelings of pleasure, anger, sadness and delight are not aroused, it is called being centred (*zhōng*). When feelings are aroused, but controlled within the centre, it is called being peaceful. Being centred is the great foundation of the world; and in this world, peace is the path that leads to *Dào*.

Zhōngyōng 1; cf. *SBCP* p.98

The *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE) describes the consequences of disturbing this equilibrium:

When man rejoices greatly, he gravitates towards *yáng* (positivity). When he is in great anger, he gravitates towards *yīn* (negativity). If the equilibrium of positive and negative is disturbed, the four seasons are upset, the balance (*hé*) of heat and cold is destroyed, and man himself suffers physically as a consequence. This causes men to rejoice and sorrow inordinately, to live disorderly lives, and to be vexed in their thoughts; then the *Dào* (which dwells) in the centre (*zhōngdào*) is obscured. When that happens, then the whole world seethes with revolt and discontent.

Zhuāngzǐ 11; cf. *WCI* p.675

The author and Daoist-influenced poet Evan Morgan (1893–1949) recognized the importance of stillness and equilibrium:

All real men safeguard the mind. They never let it drift, and so they accomplish great things and great results are achieved. The attitude is

one of stillness or a perfect equilibrium of forces, *i.e.* not disturbed by passion. . . . They understand that the changes occurring in the body are only the natural processes of evolution; they feel assured that the spirit can never die; and accordingly, look on it as a matter of supreme importance to safeguard the spirit through the mind, or safeguard the heart – the soil whence the spirit comes. This is most important! Evolving from the *zhēnrén*, true man, there grows, naturally, the *zhìrén*, superman – the highest class of beings in nature.

Evan Morgan, Tao The Great Luminant, TGLE p.xxiii

The meaning of *zhōng* (centre, mean) is also discussed by the contemporary Daoist author Deng Ming-Dao:

When we understand the importance of moderation, then we will automatically operate from the centre.

In all matters, the ancients counselled moderation. For them, the primary sin was excess, for excess destroyed all sense of what was human and plunged a person far from a true way in life. If all of life can be thought of as a continuous walk along a great path, the worst thing in life is to lose one's balance on that path. That is why the ancients continually underscored the need for moderation with the word *zhōng*.

It is a clearly drawn word – a target with an arrow piercing its centre. For the arrow to hit the target, it must fly true. If the archer inclines to the left or right, even by a mere fraction of a hair's breadth, the arrow will not fly a true path. And once an arrow has hit its target, it has attained the only correct spot – any other place shows imbalance.

So whenever we are confronted with the impossible in life, we need only think back to what the ancients would counsel: be moderate. If we keep that as our aim, then there will be few mistakes in life.

Deng Ming-Dao, Everyday Tao, ETBH p.136

See also: **hé**.

zhuó, hún, ní (C) *Lit.* muddy, murkiness, turbidity (*zhuó*); mixed, confused, dirty (*hún*); mud (*ní*); terms used for something that is bad or impure; in a spiritual context, a chaotic, confused, corrupted or dull state of mind, lacking clarity and purity.

By contrast, *hún*, when used as a verb, also means 'to mix in' or 'to blend in', and describes how a sage unobtrusively blends in with the world. It depicts the sage's state of mind – undifferentiating, non-discriminating, passing no judgment on right and wrong. *Hún* also describes the mysterious state of the unmanifested and uncreated origin of everything.

Still water is clear, but when stirred it becomes muddy. It moves from clarity to muddiness, but can return to clarity if it remains still and the mud is allowed to settle. While clarity or purity (*qīng*) is characteristic of heaven, muddiness or murkiness (*zhuó*) is characteristic of earth and particularly of human beings who have become conditioned by the mundane. The Daoist, therefore, works to settle and still the mind. By quietening the mind, he automatically acquires the clarity and purity that is a prerequisite for merging with the *Dào*:

What can prevent the murkiness (*zhuó*)?
Let it be still (*jìng*),
and it will gradually become clear (*qīng*).

Dàodé jīng 15; cf. *TT1* p.58

The *Dàodé jīng* (c. C3rd BCE) is using the familiar metaphor of patiently waiting for the sediment in muddy water to settle, so that the water eventually becomes clear. It is an allusion to the untiring patience and strength required to silence and empty the mind. If this is achieved, one returns to the primordial silence from which life originates. This is the pattern echoed in nature: all things return to rest after a period of activity. Extending the example of muddy water, master Hóng Zichéng (C16th) says in his *Vegetable Roots Discourses*:

When there are no waves on the surface of the pond, the water is naturally still. When the dust is cleaned from a mirror, it is naturally bright. Therefore, it is not necessary to clean your heart; just get rid of muddy (*hún*) and misleading thoughts, and your pure spirit will naturally emerge. Likewise, it is not necessary to seek happiness; just get rid of the pain in your heart, and happiness will naturally abide there.

Hóng Zichéng, Càigēntán 151, CGT, TRW p.151

The same imagery is found in the expression *jīzhuó yángqīng*, which means ‘drain away the mud and bring in fresh water’. Metaphorically, it refers to the elimination of what is bad and unwanted, and the entry of what is good and desirable.

The image of the lotus flower (water lily), a well-known Buddhist symbol, appears in many Daoist contexts. Because its blossoms emerge pure and beautiful from roots anchored in mud, Daoists and Buddhists alike view the lotus as a symbol of the state of purity, the true nature of human beings. For most human beings, their original nature has become stained by the mud of the world. The spiritually oriented, wishing to refine and purify their nature, and restore it to its original pristine condition, endeavour to maintain purity while living in the world, just as a lotus flower is rooted in mud. Master Wáng Zhé (C12th) uses the lotus to symbolize the mind that has attained enlightenment and is free from the mire of the material world:

‘Leaving the mundane world’ does not mean that the body leaves (the world); it refers to a state of mind (*xīndì*). The body is like a lotus root, the mind (*xīn*) like a lotus blossom. The root is in mud (*ní*), but the blossom is in the empty void (*xūkōng*) (in the clear air). For one who has realized the *Dào*, his body may reside in the mundane world, but his mind (*xīn*) dwells in the realm of the sages (*shèngjìng*).

Wáng Zhé, *Chóngyáng lijào shíwǔ lùn* 15, JY190 5b–6a, DZ1233; cf. HDP8 p.46

See also: **qīngjìng**.

zìrán (C) *Lit.* self (*zì*) so (*rán*), naturally (*zì*) so (*rán*); of itself so, by itself, as it is, the way it is; hence, nature, natural; naturally, automatically; spontaneity, naturalness; free from abnormality or deficiency; also, living in harmony with the natural world, allowing the natural force that is within every living creature to work freely; also, an epithet for the natural world. The term has been in use since at least the third century BCE, appearing in five chapters of the *Dàodé jīng*.¹

As an adjective, *zìrán* means ‘natural’, ‘true’ and ‘primal’. It is the essential nature of something. On the cosmological level, *zìrán* describes the perfect functioning of nature – the way creation goes on by itself without anyone or anything apparently ‘doing’ it.

At the human level, *zìrán* refers to the highest degree of naturalness – action that draws on the innate naturalness and spontaneity of the spirit within, in which ego and desire play no part. Understood in this way, *zìrán* does not imply uninhibited fulfilment of desires and fantasies, since these are selfish and gratuitous. On the contrary, *zìrán* is the ideal personal state and a core value in Daoism. It is therefore a quality that the Daoist seeks and embraces as he puts teachings into practice. *Zìrán* is a state that results from the practice and attitude of *wúwéi* (non-action, non-contrivance, non-contention, non-interference; unforced, disinterested, or selfless action). It is also a result of quietistic meditation, of sitting calmly and becoming tranquil. In this context, *zìrán* means keeping one’s mind in a state of purity and cleanliness – free and clear.

In spiritual life, many things happen naturally and automatically as a result of spiritual practice. These include an increasing purity of mind and a lessening of interest in the material world, a realization of the nature of one’s self, and the natural manner by which awareness of one’s original or true spiritual nature rises to the surface. All of these are at times referred to by the term *zìrán*, or by related terms such as *zì* (oneself, naturally, automatically) and *zìlái* (to come of one’s own accord, naturally, automatically).

Wáng Jiè (C14th) says that an empty mind “will automatically (*zìrán*) see” all the imperfections of the human mind:

If the mirror is empty (*xū*) and clear (*míng*), you will automatically (*zìrán*) see the devious ways of the human mind. If the mind is empty (*xū*) and clear (*míng*), you will automatically (*zìrán*) know the difference between good and bad. In emptiness (*xū*), form is exposed; in clarity (*míng*), desire is revealed. Form and desire are both illusions, and are not part of the underlying Reality (*i.e.* *Dào*). Therefore, the great sages have always valued emptiness (*xū*).

Wáng Jiè, Dàoxuán piān 15, DZ1075; cf. NEL pp.32–33

The seventh-century *Nèiguān jīng* (‘Scripture on Inner Contemplation’) says that the *Dào* “automatically (*zìlái*) comes to stay” with one who keeps the mind pure and still:

For someone who is able to keep the mind always pure and still (*qīngjìng*), the *Dào* will automatically (*zìlái*) come to stay. When the *Dào* automatically (*zìlái*) comes to stay, spiritual light (*shénmíng*) will suffuse the entire self. When spiritual light (*shénmíng*) suffuses the self, (spiritual) life will not perish.

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 5a; cf. TMLT p.215

The twentieth-century master Táng Guāngxīān repeats the same message:

The exercise of sitting (meditation) is called *jìngzuò* (sitting in stillness) because it cleanses all impurity from the mind. Once the impurity has been removed, the mind becomes clear and still, and the truth of the *Dào* is naturally (*zìrán*) and automatically revealed.

For those who cannot see the truth of the *Dào*, it is because their mind is too riotous, and cannot see deeply past the transient nature of things.

For those who practise the *Dào*, whether or not they are sitting in meditation (*jìngzuò*), it is imperative to cleanse and clear all accumulated impurity from the mind. As a *Shāng* dynasty (c. 1600–1046) inscription says, “Renew it day by day.” But no need to worry; after some time, you will automatically (*zìrán*) see the benefit.

Táng Guāngxīān, Liǎodào mìlù, JH77

Sūn Sīmǎo (C7th) says that one who gives constant attention to the *Dào* “will automatically (*zìrán*) become a sage (*shèng*)”:

Remain constantly present and still at the source of the *Dào*, and you will automatically become a sage (*shèng*). Then energy (*qì*) will pervade spirit and its many created projections, and spirit will pervade all wisdom (*huì*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). With your (spiritual)

life (*mìng*) and your embodiment preserved, you will be one with your true nature (*zhēnxìng*). You will be as old as the sun and moon!

Sūn Sīmiǎo, Cúnshén liànnqì míng, DZ834 12a; cf. TEAK p.320

Referring to the similar *Chán* Buddhist term *zhēnrú* (S. *Tathatā*, Thusness, Suchness, As-it-is-ness), master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says that by allowing things to be ‘of themselves so’, the Daoist, “neither distinguishing nor discriminating”, naturally follows the eternal law of the *Dào*:

The nature of true thusness (*zhēnrú*) is inherently true as it is (*zìrú*) – neither forced nor contrived. It is neither physical nor empty. It is what is called neither distinguishing nor discriminating, obeying the laws of God (*dì*, emperor).

To cultivate this nature, you must comprehend this nature. Comprehending this nature, you must refine this nature into the Indestructible. Only then can you be saved. If you comprehend but do not know how to cultivate and refine it, your life is not in your hands and still depends on destiny. When the time comes, you have no support but to die and be born again, without escape.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

The Buddhist and Daoist writer Alan Watts (1915–1973) provides an everyday perspective on this state of naturalness and spontaneity. Speaking of its loss and recovery, he says:

When you see a little child dancing, who has not yet learned to dance before an audience, you can see the child dancing all by itself; and there is a kind of wholeness and genuine integrity to its motion.

When the child then sees that parents or teachers are watching, and learns that they may approve or disapprove, the child begins to watch itself while dancing. All at once the dancing becomes stiff, and then becomes artful, or worse, artificial, and the spirit of the child’s dance is lost. But if the child happens to go on studying dance, it is only after years and years that, as an accomplished artist, the dancer regains the naivety and the naturalness of their original dance. But when the naturalness is regained, it is not just the simple, we could say embryonic, naturalness of the child, completely uncultivated and untutored. Instead it is a new kind of naturalness that takes into itself and carries with itself years and years of technique, know-how, and experience.

In all this you will see that there are three stages. There is first what we might call the natural or the childlike stage of life, in which self-consciousness has not yet arisen. Then there comes a middle stage, which we might call one’s awkward age, in which one learns

to become self-conscious. And finally, the two are integrated in the rediscovered innocence of a liberated person.

Alan Watts, What is Tao?, WTAO pp.47–49

The Japanese scholar Akira Ohama (C20th) explains the meaning of *zìrán* in a wider context – first, the *zìrán* of all things in the world, and then the *zìrán* of the *Dào*:

The *Dào* acts like an immanent energy, a mysterious presence within the world of the ten thousand things (*wànwù*). Therefore, the individual effects of the ten thousand things – if they are not prevented from following their own nature – are in accordance with the *zìrán* of the *Dào*. What matters is not the self-conscious intentional striving for oneness with the *Dào*, but rather the fact that human action is identical with the *Dào* that is present and acting in man. That is *zìrán*.

Akira Ohama, in WTB p.126

Zìrán is thus closely associated with *dé* – the nature, characteristics and virtues shared by all members of any particular class or species, and the complex of emotional and mental attributes that determine a person's characteristic actions and reactions. *Dé* is also the nature and 'virtue' of the *Dào* itself.

To develop and maintain a state of *zìrán*, a Daoist must cultivate an attitude of *wúwéi* (non-action), of effortless activity whereby he does only what is necessary, allowing things to run their natural course without desire for a particular outcome. In this sense, *zìrán* means following the role model of the sage (*shèngrén*), who honours and abides by the workings of the *Dào* in the world, especially in human affairs.

Daoists understand that creation operates perfectly and naturally, without calculated purpose. All participants in creation are in harmony with their own natural character (*dé*); in other words, they are 'self so (*zìrán*)'. The one exception is human beings. Because of their intellect and their unique sense of discrimination, they generally act self-consciously and with self-interest. Nevertheless, as it says in the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th), the primordial spirit resides within all human beings. Their essential inner nature is "naturally just so" – it is self-existent, it is what it is – which is simply another name for the *Dào*:

That which is naturally just so (*zìrán*) is called the *Dào*. The *Dào* is without name or form. It is the one Essence (*yīxìng*), the one primordial Spirit (*yuánshén*). Your (original) nature (*xìng*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) cannot be seen. They dwell within the light of heaven (*tiānguāng*). The light of heaven cannot be seen. It dwells within the two eyes.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 1, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

If a Daoist follows the instructions of an enlightened master, he will eventually attain a state of *zìrán* – a state of selflessness in which whatever action is performed becomes ‘actionless action’ or ‘unforced action’. Daoists are encouraged to model themselves on the world of nature, gradually acquiring the *dé* (nature, virtue) of the *Dào*; for by so doing, they will become “the embodiment of *Dào*”, and their actions will also become natural and spontaneous. By observing the natural world, they will come to understand that there is a time and a place for everything in the natural unfolding of things:

Nature (*zìrán*) uses few words:
 A squall does not last all morning,
 a sudden shower does not go on all day.
 What causes these? – heaven and earth (*tiāndì*).
 So, if nature (*tiāndì*) cannot make such intermittent things last long,
 how much less can human beings?

He who lives in accordance with the *Dào*
 becomes the embodiment of *Dào*.
 He who lives in accordance with *dé*
 becomes the embodiment of *dé*.

Dàodé jīng 23

Having reached this stage of spiritual elevation, the Daoist no longer calculates before acting, for he desires no particular outcome; nor does he take any credit for his action or non-action. From the Daoist perspective, actions performed in this way reflect true detachment from the outcome of events. As the *Dàodé jīng* says in a passage that applies equally to a statesman, a sage, or any human being:

The great ruler speaks little,
 and his words are priceless.
 He works without self-interest,
 and leaves no trace.
 When all is finished, the people say,
 “‘It happened by itself (*zìrán*).”

Dàodé jīng 17, TTCS p.30

And regarding every created thing:

All things arise from the *Dào*:
 their natures (*dé*) are its gift,
 their forms, its manifestations,
 their characteristics, its expressions.

This is how the ten thousand things
 are subject to the *Dào* and cherish their natures (*dé*).
 Nobody commands them
 to be subject to the *Dào* and to cherish their natures (*dé*).
 It's just the way things are (*zìrán*), and it never changes.

Dàodé jīng 51

The *Dàodé jīng* also speaks of the ‘four great manifestations’ of *Dào*, and how they are all ultimately modelled on the *Dào*, which is “naturally so (*zìrán*)”. It is the way it is:

Man models himself on earth,
 earth models itself on heaven;
 Heaven models itself on *Dào*,
Dào models itself on the naturally so (*zìrán*).

Dàodé jīng 25, TVWC p.60

The verse is explained by the Daoist scholar Wáng Bì (C3rd CE):

‘To model’ means to follow specific rules. Man does not act contrary to (the rules of the) earth, and thus he obtains safety and comfort; this is what is meant by “models himself on earth”. Earth does not act contrary to (the rules of) heaven, and thus it can support (all things); this is what is meant by “models itself on heaven”. Heaven does not act contrary to (the rules of) *Dào*, and thus it can shelter (all things); this is what is meant by “models itself on *Dào*”. *Dào* does not act contrary to what is “naturally so (*zìrán*)” means to follow the rules of the square while inside the square, or to follow the rules of the circle while inside the circle; that is, to adhere without exception to what is naturally so (*zìrán*). “Naturally so (*zìrán*)” is a term for what cannot be designated, an expression for the Ultimate. . . . Thus, they model one another, successively.

Wáng Bì, *Dàodé zhénjīng* (25) zhù, DZ690, TVWC p.61

In a short anecdote, Zhuāngzǐ (c. C3rd BCE) tells of the fictitious Tiān Gēn (‘Firmly Planted in Heaven’) who, while travelling, happens to meet a ‘nameless man’. Tiān Gēn asks him the best way to rule, to which the nameless man replies:

Let your heart journey in simplicity.
 Be one with that which is beyond definition.
 Let things be what they are (*zìrán*).
 Have no personal views –
 this is how everything under heaven is ruled.

Zhuāngzǐ 7, CTMP p.61

Being “one with that which is beyond definition” means to stay close to the One (*Dào*) and to guard that oneness; for, in response, the *Dào* – of itself so – will guard the spirit.

See also: **dé** (►4), **pǔ**, **wúwéi** (►4).

1. *Dàodé jīng* 17, 23, 25, 51, 64.

zìwù (C) *Lit.* to be aware (*wù*) of oneself (*zì*); comprehension or understanding of oneself; self-enlightenment, the awakening inner consciousness.

The twelfth-century master Mǎ Yù (*aka.* Dānyáng) says that enlightenment or awakening requires purification of the mind and the dispelling of spiritual ignorance:

To realize the *Dào*, awaken the inner consciousness (*zìwù*).
 Unconsciousness (*bùwù*) arises
 from the slumber of darkness and ignorance (*hūnméng*).
 To break through this darkness and ignorance (*hūnméng*),
 first cleanse the mind (*xīn*).
 It is essential to purify it continuously,
 until it is perfectly clear and bright.
 That’s all there is to it.
 When you yourself make an effort, you will be successful –
 it is useless to plead and pray to others for help.
 This method may appear slow and simple,
 but it brings clarity and light.

Mǎ Yù, *Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù* 2, DZ1057

To reach that state, says master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821), a “true master (*zhēnshī*)” is required:

To practise the *Dào*, you must awaken the inner consciousness (*zìwù*).
 Without delay, find the way out by seeking a true master (*zhēnshī*) in
 order to comprehend your (original) nature (*xìng*) and (true spiritual)
 life (*mìng*). Do not despair over lack of good fortune; do not give up
 and waste your life in this world.

Liú Yīmíng, *Zhōuyì* (29) *chǎnzhēn*, ZW245, DS13

In his *Discourse on the Embodiment of *Dào**, Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) adds that the *Dào* is ineffable and so profound that, without the help of the “saints (*shèng*)”, human beings are generally unable to awaken to its all-pervading presence:

Abstruse and obscure,¹ it is hard to say it exists. Having something within itself, it is hard to say it does not exist. Above it, nothing is brighter; below it, nothing is darker. Facing it, you can see no beginning; behind it, you can see no end.

None can tell whence it arises; it cannot be adequately explained in words. It is a form without form, an image without image, a word without words; yet this wordless word pervades the whole world. Where forms and names are manifest, then arises the distinction between the worldly (*fán*) and the saintly (*shèng*).

Truly, unable to awaken themselves (*zìwù*), the worldly (*fán*) are left to rely on experience accumulated through their senses as their only means of seeking this all-pervasiveness (*tōng*). But the saints (*shèng*) do not abandon other beings; rather they impart their teachings to them at the right moment in the right way.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Dàotǐ lùn, DZ1035 2b

1. Cf. *Dàodé jīng* 21.

8.2 SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE MYSTICAL STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, an individual must first find a way of going beyond ordinary perception. All mystic traditions have spoken of an inner, spiritual light. Many have also described a spiritual sound or music. Mystics have said that the soul experiences this inner sound or music by means of spiritual 'senses' or faculties that see, hear, and perceive on the inner or spiritual planes of consciousness. Many have also described a 'door', a 'passage' or a 'gate' through which the soul and mind must 'pass' in order to know the mystical experience in greater depth. These are all metaphors and images used to describe the essentially indescribable, and which constitute the subject areas covered in the present section.

akhaṇḍ jyoti (H), **akhaṇḍ jot** (Pu) *Lit.* ceaseless (*akhaṇḍ*) flame (*jyoti*); the inner flame or divine light that is never extinguished; the eternal flame; the inner light.

See also: **jyotis**.

ānkhī (H), **akhī, ākhī** (Pu) *Lit.* eye; spiritually, the inner eye, inner vision. Mystics say that they speak from what they themselves have experienced with their own inner vision:

With the eye of the mind (*hiye ānkhī*)
yes, with his own eyes, Tulsī has beheld
all that of which he speaks.

Tulsī Sāhib, Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ 1, Bhed pind aur brahmāṇḍ kā, GR1 p.69

Listen to the true story of the saints (*sant*):
they speak only of what they see with their (inner) eyes (*ākhī*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 894, AGK

By divine grace and with the help of a *guru*, the inner eye of the devotee is also opened:

Those who have good destiny pre-ordained
and inscribed on their foreheads,
grasp it and keep it enshrined in the heart.
Through the *guru*'s teachings, they intuitively taste the sublime, exquisite and ambrosial sermon (*amrit kathā*) of the Lord.
The divine light (*pargās*) shines in their hearts,
and like the sun which removes the darkness of night,
it dispels the darkness of ignorance.

They behold with their eyes (*ākhī*)
the unseen, imperceptible, unknowable, immaculate Lord.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 87

Conversely, Guru Angad says that the mystic sees without the help of the physical senses. In this state, they are dead to the world and alive to the divine presence:

To see without eyes (*akhī*), to hear without ears,
to walk without feet, to work without hands,
and to speak without tongue –
Like this, one remains dead while yet alive.

O Nānak, recognize the Lord's *hukam* (will),
and merge with your Lord and Master.

Guru Angad, Ādi Granth 139, AGK

See also: **chakshus**.

antardṛishṭi (S) *Lit.* inner (*antar*) vision (*dṛishṭi*); the faculty that sees the inner light or phenomena of the inner spiritual planes. According to the *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad*, *antardṛishṭi* is “associated with the mind (*manas*)”, and is active when “light (*tejas*) appears in the space between the two eyebrows”. Following this, the *antarlakshya* (inner perception, inner vision) sees the *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’, the thousand-petalled lotus).¹

See also: **dṛishṭi** (8.1).

1. *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 1:3–4.

antarjyotis (S), **antar jyoti** (H), **antar jot** (Pu) *Lit.* inner (*antar*) flame (*jyotis*); the inner light, the light within; the light of the true self or soul, experienced within on the inner planes:

The *yogī* whose happiness is within,
who rests in joy within,
and who likewise experiences the light within (*antarjyotis*) –
Having become *Brahman*,
attains beatitude in *Brahman* (*brahmanirvāṇa*).

Bhagavad Gītā 5:24; cf. BGT

The ultimate source of this light is the Word or creative power:

Within me is the light (*antar jot*) of the Word (*Bāṇī*)
continuously shining:
And I am attached in love to the true Lord.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 634, AGC

He in whose heart is the divine light (*antar jot*)
is awakened by the *Shabd Dhun* (Melody of the Word).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 489, MMS

See also: **jyotis**.

antarmukh (H/Pu) *Lit.* face (*mukh*) within (*antar*); inward facing, directed within; also, an inward-facing person, an introvert; spiritually, one whose attention is directed inward in search of the higher Reality. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes of the inward practice of the divine Word (*Shabd*):

O unfortunate man, what can I tell you?
You are wandering about outside in the ocean of existence.
You have not kept your mind
in the inwardly directed (*antarmukh*) practice of *Shabd*.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 14:12.12–13, SBP p.114

Practise inward-facing (*antarmukh*) meditation,
while sitting in a lonely place,
and you will receive mental peace.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 13:1.43, SBP p.108

Those who are directed inwardly (*antarmukh*) to *Shabd*
will come to know the Truth.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 41:23.11, SBP p.385

anwār (A), **anvār** (P) (sg. *nūr*) *Lit.* lights, rays of light; also splendour, glory; the lights seen by the soul on the inner planes, as in expressions such as *Nūr al-anwār* (Light of lights), meaning the divine Essence, that gives rise to all lesser lights; *anwār al-‘arsh* (lights of the throne), the ‘throne’ signifying an exalted stage on the inner ascent of the soul; and *anwār al-yaqīn* (lights of certainty), referring to the certainty that accompanies the mystical knowledge gained by contact with the light within.

The inner light is a reflection of the light of God. Rūmī speaks of the mystic who “has carried off supplies of wisdom (*khīrad*) from the pearl treasury of that sea of bounty, by replenishment from which the heart becomes filled with knowledge”; he then goes on to speak of the “light (*nūr*) from the heart (*dīl*)” that has “come into contact with the spiritual lights (*anvār-i ‘aqlī*)”.¹ The experience of inner light is not a metaphor, but a real experience:

Lights (*anwār*) are visible (*shahādah*), and the Real is a light, so He is witnessed and seen.

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 4:443.33, FMIA8 (6:559) p.232, SPK p.342

‘Ināyat Khān speaks of *anvār* and *anẓār* (sg. *naẓar*, inner sight) referring to the soul’s ability to see without eyes on the subtle planes:

In the meditative life, by the mystical experiences of *anvār* and *anzār*, a Sufi realizes the fact that there are objects which the soul can see without the help of eyes, and that there are sounds that it can hear without the help of ears. The great poet Kabīr has said, “What a play it is that the blind reads the *Qur’ān*, the deaf hears the *Gītā*, the handless is industrious, the footless is dancing.” He refers to the soul which has the capacity of working even without instruments such as the organs of the body and the faculties of the mind.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK5 p.85

The entire creation is a manifestation of the divine Light. Many lights and scenes can be witnessed in the higher realms as well as in this world, and the questing soul must learn discrimination. Such lesser lights include those of the subtle ‘elements’ comprising creation:

What are termed lights of the winds (*anvār-i riyāḥ*) belong to the lights of the elements (*anvār-i ‘unṣurīyah*). These lights are . . . invisible to the physical eye. Vision of them is only attained in the intermediate realm. Such lights (*anvār*) have power to overwhelm everyone but the people of God (*ahl-i Allāh*), whose own light envelops and contains these elemental lights (*anvār-i ‘unṣurīyah*), just as solar light (*nūr-i āftāb*) envelops the light of the stars (*anvār-i kavākib*).

Shāh Nī‘mat Allāh Valī, Rasā’il, RNV4 p.214; cf. in SSE4 p.12

See also: **nazar**, **nūr**.

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* III:4313–16; cf. *MJR4* p.241.

ardh (H) *Lit.* half, halved, forming a half. Some mystics have referred to the eye centre as the halfway or midway point (*ardh*) on the inner journey. To withdraw the attention from the world and from desire for activity in the realm of the senses is a very difficult task for any human being. Hence, someone who has been able to withdraw all attention from the body and the senses and become fully concentrated at the eye centre is said to have covered half the spiritual journey back to God. The term is commonly used in conjunction with *ūrdh* (higher).

See also: **ūrdhva**.

aur, ma’or (He) *Lit.* light (*aur*), either material or spiritual; that which illuminates (*ma’or*); the creative energy of God; the various levels of realization experienced within, their source being the primal light of God; the light of the soul.

In *Genesis*, the first emanation of the Godhead is described as “light”:

And God said, “Let there be light (*aur*): and there was light (*aur*).”
And God saw the light (*aur*), that it was good: and God divided the
light (*aur*) from the darkness. And God called the light (*aur*) ‘Day’,
and the darkness he called ‘Night’. And there was evening and there
was morning, one day.

Genesis 1:3–5, KB

Later Jewish mystics explained how the entire creation was projected from God’s initial creation of light. Graded emanations (*sefirot*) of that light were projected from the primal divine light of the Godhead. From the projection and interplay of these *sefirot*, the entire creation came into being.

Divine light also appears in biblical texts as the source of spiritual guidance and nourishment to the soul, and as the dispeller of inner darkness. This darkness can be understood either as a metaphor for the human condition of spiritual ignorance; or as a description of the world itself and the human beings in it; or as a reference to the inner darkness first encountered on the spiritual journey, which later gives way to inner light. The light that alleviates this darkness can hence refer either to spiritual guidance or to experience of the soul’s innate light. Isaiah addresses the Israelites as “the people who walked in (the) darkness” of spiritual ignorance in “the land of the shadow of death”:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light (*aur*):
they who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the
light (*aur*) shined.

Isaiah 9:1, JCL

The “great light” refers either to the inner light that dispels the darkness of ignorance or to a guide who can bring spiritual light to the people of his time and place, teaching the mystic path that elevates the soul, and bringing them a previously unimaginable understanding:

I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them
in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light (*aur*)
before them, and crooked things straight. These things I will do and
not forsake them.

Isaiah 42:16, JCL

In the thirteenth-century *Zohar*, the primary work of the Kabbalah, the spiritual power is described as streams of flowing water and the flowing of light. These are metaphorical references to the *sefirot*, the successive emanations of the primal light by which the creation came into being. The *sefirot*

emanate one from the other like the flow of water or light. Spiritual light is always present, yet when the soul is cut off from its Source, it experiences a state of ‘exile’ and becomes unaware of the light within.

According to the metaphorical imagery of the *Zohar*, God enlisted the help of the “Righteous One (the *sefirah* of *Yesod*, the Foundation), who is the gardener”, when he sowed His primal light as a “seed of truth” in the Garden of Eden. These seeds sprouted and produced the fruit – the *sefirot*, the lesser lights derived from the primal light – that nourishes creation:

The Holy One, blessed be He, sowed this light (*aur*) in the Garden of Eden, and He arranged it in rows with the help of the Righteous One (*Zaddik*), who is the gardener in the Garden. And he took this light (*aur*), and sowed it as a seed of truth, and arranged it in rows in the Garden, and it sprouted and grew and produced fruit, by which the world is nourished. This is the meaning of the verse, “Light (*aur*) is sown for the righteous (*zaddik*)...”¹ And it is written, “The garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth.”² What are “the things that are sown in it”? These are the sowings of the primal light (*aur*), which is always sown. Now it brings forth and produces fruit, and now it is sown as at the beginning. Before the world eats this fruit, the seed produces and gives fruit, and does not rest. Consequently, all the worlds are nourished through the supply of the gardener, who is called the Righteous One (*Zaddik*), and who never rests or ceases, except when Israel is in exile.

Zohar 2:166b, WZL p.442

According to kabbalistic symbolism, the exile of Israel represents the disharmony between the *sefirot*, specifically the estrangement of the qualities of *Yesod* (Foundation, the creative male principle) and *Malkut* (Kingship, the *Shekhinah*, the immanent, receptive female). The *Shekhinah* also signifies the community of Israel, which is symbolized as the beloved of God, but is estranged and in exile. Normally, *Yesod* is the conduit for the divine power to flow from the higher *sefirot* via *Malkut* into the physical creation. But when these two forces are in disharmony, then the flow of light, the divine river that flows through the Garden of Eden, is blocked. The original sowing by the gardener still produces some fruit, as not all seed goes to waste, but exile signifies that the divine flow through the *Shekhinah* has been cut off. From an individual perspective, the seeds of truth or light represent the soul of each person, which is the recipient of the divine light. When the soul turns away from God and is in internal disharmony, it is in spiritual exile, and no longer feels the divine presence.

Some kabbalists developed meditation practices specifically intended for concentration on the various stages of the light. In his *Sha'arei Kedushah*

(‘Gates of Holiness’), Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital includes an essay by the early thirteenth-century ‘Azriel of Gerona, which elaborates on ‘light’ meditation and describes the levels of spiritual light that correspond to the various *sefirot*. The twentieth-century scholar Aryeh Kaplan summarizes these as:³

	Light		Sefirot
<i>Tov</i>	Good	<i>Ḥesed</i>	Love, grace
<i>Nogah</i>	Glow	<i>Gevurah</i>	Might
<i>Kavod</i>	Glory	<i>Tiferet</i>	Beauty
<i>Bahir</i>	Brilliance	<i>Neṣaḥ</i>	Victory
<i>Zohar</i>	Radiance	<i>Hod</i>	Splendour
<i>Ḥayyim</i>	Life	<i>Yesod</i>	Foundation

‘Azriel’s work is echoed by Rabbi Moses de León, one of the primary authors of the *Zohar*. In his *Shekel ha-Kodesh* (‘The Holy Coin’), de León elaborates on further levels of spiritual light, but concludes that in fact it is all one light, though comprised of many stages:

Gaze at a candle. You will find the black light at the bottom, and the *bahir* (brilliant) light at the top. But it is all one mystery and one light, and there is no separation whatsoever.

Moses de León, Shekel ha-Kodesh, HCML p.124, in MKAK p.124

Kabbalistic literature also includes some rare personal accounts of the inner light. In *Sha’arei Žedek* (‘Gates of Virtue’), an anonymous disciple of the thirteenth-century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia describes an experience of the inner light while practising a concentration technique taught by his master that involved continuous writing of verbal names of God:

The third night, after midnight, I nodded off a little, quill in my hand and paper on my knees. Then I noticed that the candle was about to go out. I rose to put it right, as oftentimes happens to a person awake. Then I saw that the light (*aur*) continued. I was greatly astonished, as though, after close examination, I saw that it issued from myself. I said: “I do not believe it.” I walked to and fro all through the house and, behold, the light (*aur*) is with me; I lay on a couch and covered myself up, and behold, the light (*aur*) is with me all the while. I said: “This is truly a great sign and a new phenomenon which I have perceived.”

Sha’arei Žedek, SZGS, in MTGS p.150

Isaac of Akko, a late contemporary of Abulafia, also describes an experience of inner light when he wakes from sleep – a state he calls “asleep but not asleep (*nim ve-lo nim*)”:

During the third watch of the night, asleep but not asleep (*nim ve-lo nim*), I saw the house in which I was sleeping to be filled with a very sweet and pleasing light (*aur*). And this light (*aur*) was not like the light (*aur*) that comes from the sun, but it was like the light (*aur*) of day, the light of dawn just before the sun shines.

This light (*aur*) stood before me for something like a third of an hour and I hurried to open my eyes to see if dawn had risen or not, (to see whether it was time) to get up to pray. I saw that it was still night, and I returned to my sleep very happy.

Isaac of Akko, Oẓar Ḥayyim, OHIA fol.197a, in LBDF p.111

Isaac relates a number of spiritual experiences in this state of being “asleep but not asleep”. He is clear that he is not dreaming, but is seeing an inner spiritual light.

A sixteenth-century kabbalist of Safed, Eleazar Azikri, recounts inner experiences of light by the early *ḥasidim* (*ḥasidim rishonim*) of the second century BCE:

The early *ḥasidim* ... who refrained from study in favour of *hitbod-edut* (meditation) and *devekut* (cleaving, intense attachment to God), described the light of the *Shekhinah* above their heads as if it spread around them and they were sitting in the midst of the light.... And then they tremble in nature and rejoice in that trembling.

Eleazar Azikri, Sefer Ḥaredim, SHEA p.256; cf. in SEKI p.165 (n.149)

The twelfth-century poet-mystic Judah Halevi writes of the divine presence that accompanies him at all times. It is the “lamp (*ner*)” that keeps the light in his soul shining:

Your Name is before me – how can I walk alone?
It is my beloved – how can I sit lonely?
It is my lamp (*ner*) – how can my light (*ma’or*) go dim?
How can I wander, with it is as a staff in my hand?

Judah Halevi, Dīvān 2:221.10, DHJL; cf. in TSSW p.185

Many of the Jewish mystics have referred to the soul as the spark of the primal divine light which is imprisoned or exiled in the material world. According to the sixteenth-century Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed, at the time of creation, the primal light was too intense to be channelled in an orderly fashion, and so the light scattered and dispersed into the physical creation. He describes this metaphorically as the ‘cosmic catastrophe’ of the ‘breaking of the vessels’. As a result, some of the sparks of the primal light fell into the chaos and disorder of the material level, where they came to exist in all created things. Since then, the sparks have been in the grip of the demonic or negative power (matter).

According to Luria, it is a disciple’s duty to free the soul and reunite it with the primal divine light, through specific meditation exercises, prayers and rituals, thus restoring order to the divine worlds as well. The process is called *tikkun* (restoration), and the notion of raising the sparks to their Source has permeated all religious practices in Judaism since then. In eighteenth-century Hasidism, for instance, the divine souls within all beings were depicted as holy sparks.

See also: **aur** (2.1), **menorah** (4.1, 7.1), **ner**.

1. *Psalms* 97:11.
2. *Isaiah* 61:11.
3. See Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, MKAK p.119; cf. Ḥayyim Vital, *Sha‘arei Kedushah* 3:1, SKHV, SKHZ p.47, *passim*.

āvṛitta-chakshus (S) *Lit.* turned-around (*āvṛitta*) eye (*chakshus*); inward-facing eye, inner eye, inner vision; the faculty of the soul and mind to see within.

The true self or soul (*ātman*), says the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, is not to be sought externally in the realm of the five senses, but with the power of inner vision (*āvṛitta-chakshus*):

The Self-existent has made five openings, facing outwards; therefore a man looks outward, not within the self (*antarātman*). Only some wise man, seeking immortality, with his eye turned inward (*āvṛitta-chakshus*), has seen the self (*ātman*).

Childish people, pursuing external pleasures, fall into the snare of ever-present Death, who lies in wait. But the wise, recognizing changeless immortality in the midst of change, desire nothing.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:1.1–2

See also: **divya-chakshus**, **jñāna-chakshus**, **tīsar nayan**.

‘ayn al-‘ayn, ‘ayn al-a’yān (A) *Lit.* eye (‘ayn) of eye(s) (‘ayn, a’yān), essence (‘ayn) of the essence(s), eye of the essence(s), a’yān being the plural of ‘ayn; the faculty of inner vision that sees Reality.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes the culmination of mystical experience, in which the soul finds utter tranquillity after the ecstasy of intoxication, as the awakening of his ‘ayn al-‘ayn:

There is no ‘where’ after (reaching) the Source;
Recovering from my intoxication,
with sobriety, the eye of the essence (‘ayn al-‘ayn) awoke.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā‘īyah 480, *DFQM* p.91; cf. *SVSL* pp.210–11

Al-Ḥallāj says that *‘ayn al-‘ayn* is the manifestation of the Divine (‘theophany’) to the mystic:

The essence of the essence (*‘ayn al-‘ayn*) is theophany of the Eternal and nothing more.

Al-Ḥallāj, in Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 8:36, MARB p.161, in SSE12 p.41

See also: **‘ayn (►1), chashm.**

‘ayn al-baṣīrah (A), **‘ayn-i baṣīrat** (P) *Lit.* eye (*‘ayn*) of insight (*baṣīrah*); synonymous with *‘ayn al-qalb* (eye of the heart); mystical insight or perception. *Baṣīrah* is used for insight of varying degrees, intellectual, human, and mystical.

See also: **‘ayn (►1), baṣīrah, chashm.**

‘ayn al-qalb (A) *Lit.* eye (*‘ayn*) of the heart (*qalb*); the eye of the spiritual heart or inner being that perceives mystical realities; equivalent to the Persian *chashm-i dil*; synonymous with *‘ayn al-baṣīrah* (eye of vision).

See also: **‘ayn (►1), chashm-i dil.**

‘ayn al-yaqīn (A), **‘ayn-i yaqīn** (P) *Lit.* eye (*‘ayn*) of certainty (*yaqīn*); the inner eye or faculty of vision that perceives the inner worlds, acquiring certain knowledge through personal mystic experience:

They that burnish their hearts have escaped
 from scent and colour (the physical senses):
 They behold the divine Beauty at every moment without tarrying.
 They have relinquished the form and husk of knowledge:
 they have raised the banner of the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*).
 Thought is gone, and they have gained light:
 they have gained the core and essence
 and the ultimate source of gnosis.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3492–94, MJR2 p.190

‘Ayn al-yaqīn is the second of three stages. The first, *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty), is the conviction necessary to practise and to persevere with the necessary effort until the inner eye opens. It is the faith of the practising

believer. The second, *‘ayn al-yaqīn* (eye of certainty or inner eye) leads in turn to the third, *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (realization of certainty), which implies realization of the mystic Truth (*Ḥaqq*).

See also: *‘ayn* (► 1), *naẓar*, *yaqīn* (8.1).

bāb (A/P) *Lit.* door, gate; in Sufi terminology, the inner door at which the devotee must gather his concentration; also, the door of the *shaykh* or master, who is the entrance to the spiritual realms. See **dar**.

bām (P) *Lit.* rooftop, roof, gallery, terrace; in Sufi terminology, the place where the Divine is experienced, the rooftop of the heart, *i.e.* the head, the ‘rooftop’ of the body, where the soul leaves the body in meditation and journeys through the inner realms; hence, rising to the rooftop implies rising up to God. The metaphor is used in a number of contexts implying the ascent to God.

Rūmī feigns the jealousy of lovers when he complains that his beloved (master) has been visiting others during their nightly meditation, yet has not visited him. The beloved knows the way, he points out, because he has visited before, and he is always welcome:

Why were you running
over other people’s doors and rooftops (*bām*) last night?
When your footprints
are already on the door and rooftop (*bām*) of my heart?
Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2475:26176, KSD5 p.215, in SSE4 p.95

Elsewhere in his *Dīvān*, he says that there is no higher dwelling than the spiritual abode of his beloved:

What rooftop (*bām*) is there but yours?
What Name is there but yours?
What chalice is there but yours?
O *sāqī* (cupbearer) of sweet eloquence!
Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 7:83, KSD1 p.8, in SSE4 p.96

The mystic lover, he says, is like a thief who in his nightly devotions steals only the finest jewels from the divine King:

I steal carnelians and pearls from the Sultan’s treasury,
I am not mean that I should steal the draper’s cloth.

Within the veil of the nights there are subtle thieves,
 who by cunning find a way
 to the roof (*bām*) of the house of mystery.
 My ambition in nightfaring and knavery is nothing less
 than the King's treasury and the carnelian of that King of glory.
Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1201:12780–82, KSD3 p.75, MP1 (153:2–4) p.127

Though God is all-light, giving light and life, the soul in the body experiences nothing but darkness. To find the divine light, says Rūmī, come to the roof, withdraw from the body:

We are all darkness, and God is light:
 from the sun has come the rays to light this abode.
 Light enters the house but is mingled with shadow:
 if you want pure light, ascend from the house to the roof (*bām*).
 Sometimes you are happy, sometimes sad:
 if you do not want a sad heart, leave this sadness.
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2902:30842–44,
 KSD6 p.174; cf. MP2 (374:7–9) p.126*

This, he intimates, is something he has already accomplished:

I departed, ridding the world of the trouble of my presence,
 I escaped from anguish with my life;
 I bade farewell to my companions,
 I transported my soul to the signless world.
 I went forth from this house of six doors:
 joyfully I carried my baggage to placelessness.
 When I beheld the master huntsman of the Unseen,
 I flew like an arrow, carrying my bow. . . .
 A marvellous moon shone through my window:
 I went to the roof (*bām*), carrying a ladder.
 The vault of heaven (*bām-i falak*),
 the assembly place of souls,
 was fairer than I had ever imagined.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1546:16233–36, 16238–39,
 KSD3 p.262; cf. MP1 (189:1–4, 6–7) pp.156–57*

Here, the “ladder” by which the soul ascends from the “roof” of the body to the “vault of heaven” is the current of divine love and grace.

bāmdād (P) *Lit.* daybreak, dawn, early morning, often a time of great physical peace and beauty; also, a time favoured by devotees for contemplation of the

inner beloved; in Sufi imagery, the blissful dawning of the inner light within the seeker after the darkness of material existence, and usually after a long struggle in inner darkness; experiences of the first glimmerings of inner light; the first unveilings of the inner mystery:

Daybreak (*bāmdād*) symbolizes the succession of states that leads to the wayfarer's advancement from the level of the darkness among lowly things to the light of the Sublime.

Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.176; cf. in SSE4 p.71

bāriqah (A), **bāriqat** (P) *Lit.* glimmer, flash; a sudden appearance and disappearance of light within the seeker's spiritual heart, bringing bliss and joy, and the hope of higher experiences:

A lightning flash (*bāriqah*) is a luminous manifestation that is bestowed upon the wayfarer from the Most Sacred. It appears briefly and does not last. It is one of the earliest indications of visionary revelation (*kashf*).

The divine Beauty appears and steals the heart,
but for only less than a moment.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.15; cf. in SSE8 p.20

See also: **barq**, **tajallī** (8.1).

barq (A/P) (pl. *burūq*) *Lit.* lightning, flash of lightning; in Sufism, the manifestation of celestial light within the heart of the seeker, appearing and disappearing suddenly, like lightning. It is

the first appearance of light (*barq*), beckoning the wayfarer to enter into close proximity with God, so that he might journey in God.

Al-Qāshānī, Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah 38, GSTA p.15; cf. GST p.10

In the initial stages, lightning (*barq*) occurs in the form of a flash of light (*lam'ah-i nūr*) awakening the devotee, urging him to set forth on the path to God. In the final stages, it is the first illumination of the utter oneness of union (*aḥadīyat al-jam'*), from which annihilation in the divine Essence follows.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 pp.179–80; cf. in SSE4 p.3

Rūzbihān explains that when the darkness of a human being's lower nature, the *naḥs al-ammārah* (the soul commanded to do evil), overshadows the seeker's spiritual aspirations, then God sends these flashes as encouragement:

When the desert of nature becomes overcast and darkened by the smoke of the commanding soul (*nafs al-ammārah*, lower mind) the heart feels lost and bewildered, not knowing how to escape therefrom. Suddenly, the lightning (*barq*) of the divine Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) flashes forth, illuminating the heart of the mystic who has realized closeness to God. He then beholds the route leading to the Unseen, and with this light, he sets out for the shelter of divine proximity. A lightning flash (*nūr al-barq*) from the Unseen dissipates the darkness of the commanding soul (*nafs al-ammārah*, lower mind), and the mystic, graced with divine proximity, realizes the essence of delight in ecstasy (*wajd*).

God says in the *Qurʾān*: “Therein is darkness, and thunder, and the flash of lightning (*barq*).”¹ Some *ṣūfīs* stated that, “Ecstasy is like lightning (*barq*).” Al-ʿArif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “Lightning (*barq*) is the sudden appearance of a revelation of light (*nūr al-tajallī*).”

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 10:14, MARB pp.193–94; cf. in SSE4 pp.4–5

Anṣārī also indicates that these sudden flashes of light are intended as encouragement to the soul. He begins by alluding to the biblical story when Moses saw a seemingly burning bush that was not consumed by fire and which turned out to be a manifestation of the Divine:²

Lightning (*barq*) is a fresh sapling that brilliantly shines on the devotee, stirring him to enter this path. The distinction that exists between lightning (*barq*) and ecstasy (*wajd*) is that ecstasy is experienced only after one has embarked on the path, being the provisions thereof, whereas lightning (*barq*) is the summons and the permission to enter the path. Lightning (*barq*) comprises three degrees:

First, as lightning (*barq*) that appears from the direction of God’s promised bounties as a glimmer of hope in the eyes, so increasing the bounty already received and reducing the multitude of the wayfarer’s hardships to a few, making sweet fate’s bitterness.

Second, as lightning (*barq*) that strikes the vigilant eye from the direction of divine warning, curtailing the devotee’s desires, so that he withdraws from people as he draws closer to God, and strives to purify his inner consciousness (*sirr*).

Third, as lightning (*barq*) that flashes upon the eye of spiritual longing from the direction of God’s grace, raising clouds of delight, releasing raindrops of joy, pouring forth a river of glory.

Anṣārī, Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn 69, MSA p.207; cf. in SSE4 p.5

Using *barq* as a more general term for the divine light, Anṣārī also says that this lightning has detached him from all desire for “this world and the next”:

O Lord, when, from the garden of love, a breeze wafted forth,
we pledged our hearts to it.
When from the orient of Truth, lightning (*barq*) blazed forth,
this material world seemed of less importance.
Thus have we forsaken both this world and the next.

Anṣārī, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 p.131; cf. in SSE4 p.5

Ḥāfiẓ indicates that the value of this light is revealed when it is taken away:

I rest these hopes on my raining tears:
That the lightning (*barq*) of fortune (*dawlat*),
which my eyes have lost, may return once more.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.50, DIH p.112; cf. in SSE4 p.4

See also: **bāriqah**, **ḥarq**.

1. *Qur'ān* 2:19.
2. *Exodus* 3:2ff.; *Qur'ān* 20:9ff.

başar (A/P) (pl. *abṣār*) *Lit.* eye, sight, vision; discernment, insight, perception; both the physical eyes and the faculty of sight, the latter being the sense in which *abṣār* is used in the *Qur'ān*;¹ mystically, inner vision, the faculty of vision with the spiritual heart, *dil* (P) or *qalb* (A), as contrasted with external vision, which is vision with the two physical eyes; from the same root as *baṣīrah* (insight), which is also understood in both mystical and mundane senses. The plural *abṣār* means not only 'eyes' but is also used as a superlative of *başar*, *i.e.* better or clearer sight.

According to al-Jīlī, *başar* is one of the seven attributes manifested in the microcosm of the perfect man (*insān al-kāmil*),² which correspond to the seven primal Names of *Allāh*. *Başar* also appears in a number of compound expressions. These include: *başar al-Ḥaqq* (sight of God) and *başar al-Qidam* (eye of Eternity), which are equivalent to 'ayn al-Ḥaqq (eye of God), all of which refer to God's all-seeing view of His creation; *başar al-ārif* (eye of the gnostic) and *başar al-baṣīrah* (eye of insight), which refer specifically to inner vision; and *ahl al-başar* (men of sight), which refers to mystics.

Using a number of terms for 'sight' and 'eye', Rūmī observes that there are many whose eyes are only open to external things, while their spiritual hearts sleep. It is better, he says, to open the eye of the heart by nightly meditation and let the outer eyes "sleep":

There is many a one whose eye (*chashm*) is awake,
 but whose heart is asleep:
 What, in truth, should be seen
 by the eyes (*dīd*) of creatures of water and clay?
 He who keeps his heart (*dil*) awake –
 though the eye (*chashm*) of his head may sleep –
 in his heart will open a hundred eyes (*başar*).
 And if you are not one of illumined heart, keep a vigil:
 be a seeker of the illumined heart, and continue the struggle.
 If your heart has been awakened, sleep sound:
 Your spiritual eye (*nāẓirat*) is not absent
 from the seven heavens and the six directions.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:1222–25; cf. MJR4 p.69

‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qāshānī says that “in the hereafter” God is seen by “direct vision (*naẓar-i ‘iyān*) and the visionary eye (*naẓar-i başar*)”, and he quotes a *ḥadīth* in support of his assertion:

In the world, believers see God through the eye of faith (*dīdah-‘i īmān*) and insight (*naẓar-i başīrat*), while in the hereafter they see Him with direct vision (*naẓar-i ‘iyān*) and the visionary eye (*naẓar-i başar*), as indicated in the *ḥadīth*, “You will soon see your Lord on the Day of Resurrection, as clearly as the moon on the night of its fullest aspect, and your view of Him will not be obscured.”

Maḥmūd Qāshānī, Mişbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah,
MHK pp.37–38; cf. in SSE7 p.25

Ibn al-‘Arabī uses *başar* as a generic term for all forms of sight, reserving *başīrah* for vision of the world Unseen. God, he says, is not seen by any faculty of sight, inner or outer:

God says, “Sight (*al-abşār*) perceives Him not,”³ that is, the sight (*‘ayn*) of any eyes, whether the eyes of faces or the eyes of hearts; for hearts perceive only through sight (*başar*), and the eyes of faces perceive only through sight (*başar*).

Wherever there is sight (*başar*), perception occurs. Sight (*başar*) in the rational faculty (*‘aql*) is called the ‘eye of insight (*‘ayn al-başīrah*)’, while sight (*başar*) in the outside world (*al-ẓāhir*) is called the ‘sight (*başar*) of the eye (*‘ayn*)’.

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 4:30.5, FMIA7 (5:421) p.44, SPK p.223

See also: ‘ayn (► 1), **başīrah**, **chashm**, **naẓar**, **nirata**.

1. *Qur'ān* 16:78, 32:9, 67:23.
2. Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* 1:63.25ff., 1:64.22–24ff., 1:55.3, 8, *IKJ* (1:40) p.183, in *SIM* pp.101–3, 128–29.
3. *Qur'ān* 6:103.

baṣar al-ʿarīf (A/P) *Lit.* eye (*baṣar*) of the mystic (*ʿarīf*); the sight of the gnostic, the vision of the gnostic; inner vision, mystical vision. In Sufi thought, *baṣar al-ʿarīf* is God's own vision that manifests in the mystic as a result of union with God. The eye of the mystic thus becomes God's own eye:

The sight possessed by the gnostics (*baṣar al-ʿarīf*) is from God; its light radiates from the eye or vision of Eternity (*baṣar al-Qidam*). By means of this sight (*baṣar*), he sees the arcane secrets and hidden mysteries, and apprehends the realities of light. This is described in God's words: "I become the hearing with which he hears, and sight with which he sees."¹

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 8:26, *MARB* p.157; cf. in *SSE1* p.18

1. Cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 8:76.509; *AMBF* 42.

baṣar al-baṣīrah (A/P) *Lit.* eye (*baṣar*) of vision (*baṣīrah*); penetrating vision; spiritual vision, inner vision. See **baṣar**, **baṣīrah**.

baṣīrah (A), **baṣīrat** (P) (pl. *baṣā'ir*) *Lit.* insight, understanding, discernment, mental perception, prudence, foresight, sagacity, intuition; in philosophy, intellectual perception and understanding; in Sufism, mystical understanding, inner vision, spiritual perception, the eye of the spirit, clairvoyance, sometimes qualified as *nūr al-baṣīrah* (light of insight, spiritual insight); one of a number of terms used by Sufis for gnosis, the mystical knowledge that comes from inner experience, including *kashf* (unveiling), *dhawq* (tasting), *fath* or *futūḥ* (opening, revelation), *shuhūd* (contemplation), and *mushāhadah* (witnessing); also described as the perceptive faculty of the *ʿaql*. *Baṣīrah* is from the same root as *al-Baṣīr* (the All-Seeing), one of the ninety-nine names of *Allāh*.

The term is sometimes divided into three degrees. The first, *shuʿāʾ al-baṣīrah* (ray of insight) refers to theoretical, conceptual, or intellectual knowledge. The second, *ʿayn al-baṣīrah* (eye of insight, inner eye), refers to mystical knowledge. The third, *Ḥaqq al-baṣīrah* (realization of insight, Truth of insight) refers to final realization of the divine Truth. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Illāh writes:

The ray of insight (*shu'ā' al-baṣīrah*)
 makes you witness His nearness to you.
 The eye of insight (*'ayn al-baṣīrah*)
 makes you witness your nonbeing as due to His Being.
 The Truth of insight (*Ḥaqq al-baṣīrah*)
 makes you witness His Being,
 not your nonbeing, nor your being.
 “God was, and there was nothing but Him,
 and He is now as He was.”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, Kitāb al-Ḥikam 3:36–37, HAAI p.52; cf. BWIC p.55

These three degrees are also called *'ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty), *'ayn al-yaqīn* (eye of certainty), and *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (realization of certainty, Truth of certainty).

Baṣīrah is the understanding and perception that grows with spiritual evolution and maturity. It begins with intellectual understanding, intelligence and human wisdom, and – through mystical experience – evolves into a higher faculty of direct perception of the inner “realities”:

Insight (*baṣīrat*) is the faculty that glows in the heart with the light of holiness, whereby the realities and inner aspects of things are seen. . . . The philosophers call insight (*baṣīrat*), the faculty of intellectual speculation. When illumined by the light of the holiness of God’s oneness (*waḥdānīyat*), the veils of conjecture and imagination are lifted from before the eye of insight (*baṣīrat*).

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.17; cf. in SSE9 p.41

The term appears in the *Qur'ān*, where Muḥammad is instructed by God to declare his certain understanding of things. It is unclear whether the passages refer to human or mystical understanding:

Say: “This is my way; I call to God with insight (*baṣīrah*) sure,
 I and whoever follows me.”

Qur'ān 12:108

Flashes of insight (*baṣā'ir*)
 have come to you from your Lord.

Qur'ān 6:104

Ibn al-ʿArabī says that there are two forms of sight. *Baṣar* sees the external, material world, while the higher worlds are perceived by *baṣīrah*:

The cosmos is two worlds, ... the Unseen ... and the Visible. The second world (the Visible) is perceived by sight (*baṣar*), while the world of the Unseen is perceived by insight (*baṣīrah*).

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 3:42.5, FMIA5 (4:311) p.61, SPK p.223

See also: **baṣar**.

bhruvoḥ-madhye (S), **bhrū-madhyā** (S/H), **bhrū madha** (H) *Lit.* middle (*madhya*) of the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ*); between the eyebrows; the point between the two eyebrows where the currents of the mind and soul are to be collected at the start of the spiritual journey within; the third eye. *Bhrū* is singular; *bhruvoḥ* is plural.

The expression finds one of its earliest uses in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where it is said to be the point of focus in the yogi's practice:

He who with a steady mind and with devotion,
and with strength born of *yoga*,
correctly focuses his entire life-force
between the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*) –
At the time of death,
he will remember that Being who is all-knowing,
primeval, subtler even than an atom,
the sustainer of all, of incomprehensible form,
as glorious as the sun,
and beyond the darkness (of ignorance and inertia) –
Truly, he will attain the Supreme.

Bhagavad Gītā 8:9–10

Excluding all external input;
Fixing the gaze between (*antare*) the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ*);
Steadying the flow of *prāṇa* (in-breath)
and *apāna* (out-breath) through the nostrils;
Controlling the senses, mind, and intellect;
Devoid of desire, fear, and anger;
And aspiring for liberation alone –
thus is a meditative sage forever liberated.

Bhagavad Gītā 5:27–28; cf. BGT

The *Paingala Upanishad* also indicates that the centre between the eyebrows is the natural focus of attention:

There are five states (*pañcha-avasthā*) – waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*sushupti*), swoon (*mūrchhā*), and death (*maraṇa*). The waking state (*jāgrat avasthā*) consists in the perception of sound and other things by means of the sense organs, such as the ears, and so on. . . . The individual soul (*jīva*), established in the midst of the eyebrows (*bhrū-madhya*), but pervading the entire body from head to foot, becomes the doer of every kind of action. . . . Being the reaper of their respective fruits, he reaps the fruit of his actions in the next world, too. Like an emperor tired of worldly activities, he seeks the way to retire into his inner chamber.

Paingala Upanishad 2:7–8

Concentration at this centre, says the author of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, is the easiest way to still the mind:

In my opinion, contemplation between the eyebrows (*bhrū-dhyāna*) leads to the transcendent state of mind (*unmanī*) in a short time. It is an easy method, even for those of modest intellect, to attain the state of *rāja yoga*. The *laya* (absorption) arising from (listening to) the *nāda* (sound) soon results in bliss.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:80; cf. *HPSD* p.162, *HYPM* p.577

The centre between the eyebrows is the place at which the concentration is focused in order for the soul to leave the body. In the mythological *Shiva Purāṇa*, the goddess *Satī*, desiring to leave her body and not return, sits in meditation and raises her subtle life energy to the *bhruvoḥ-madhya*. According to the story, when she has left her body, it then disintegrates:

Having duly sipped water, covering up her body entirely with her shawl, she closed her eyes and remembered her lord. She then entered yogic absorption (*samāvishat*). Keeping her face steady she balanced the life energies (*vāyu*) of *prāṇa* and *apāna*. She then lifted up the wind *udāna* from the umbilical region, stabilized it in the cardiac region took it through the throat, and finally fixed it in the middle of the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ*).

Shiva Purāṇa, *Rudra Saṃhitā* 2:30.3–5; cf. *SPS1* p.415

The medieval *Advaita* Vedantist Appayya Dīkshita (1520–1593) writes:

Focus on the self-shining soul (*ātman*) within, between the two eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhya*); listen (to the text), “Thou are That;” understand your oneness with it, and practise (*abhyāset*) (meditation).

Appayya Dīkshita, *Yoga Darpaṇa*; cf. in *PU* p.137 (n.1)

Kabīr has also used the same expression:

Between the two eyebrows (*bhrū madha*) is the master,
the messenger of the Lord.
Between the black and the white moles
is the shining star;
And within the star dwells the unknown and unseen Lord.

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 20, KSS1 p.64

Here, the black and white moles in Kabīr's poem refer to the two petals of the *do-dal kamal* (two-petalled lotus) or *āgyā chakra*, other names for the eye centre. Focusing in this centre, the soul becomes aware of its own inner light, and its essential identity with the Divine.

bijlī (H/Pu), **bijurī** (H) *Lit.* lightning, thunderbolt; a metaphor for the inner light, accompanied by sound, as in the poetry of the Indian *sants* (saints) Swami Shiv Dayal Singh and Kabīr:

How can I describe the beauty of those groups of pure souls (*hansas*),
where *Shabd* forever falls in showers?
Dazzling lightning (*bijlī*) is resounding in the sky:
how else can I describe this beauty?

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 1:1.27–28, SBP p.5

Rising high up in the sky,
you reach the stage of the thousand-petalled lotus.
Beyond the (third) eye (*til*),
you will see dazzling lightning (*bijlī*),
and will hear the *anāhad Shabd*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:7.9–10, SBP p.146

And:

Where lightning (*bijurī*) flashes without clouds,
where dazzling light shines without a sun,
where pearls of radiant sheen form without mother of pearl,
where the sweet music of the divine Voice
resounds without a speaker, without rhythm or tune –
O friend, such is my homeland.

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 7:3–4, KSS1 p.59

bodha-chakshus (S) *Lit.* eye (*chakshus*) of wisdom (*bodha*); the inner eye, the eye of consciousness; the spiritual eye that sees the light and scenery of the inner realms, and which automatically infuses the soul with divine knowledge and wisdom. See **jñāna-chakshus**.

brahmadvāra (S/H) *Lit.* door (*dvāra*) of *Brahma* or *Brahman*; an opening in the *mūlādhāra chakra* before which lies the ‘sleeping’ *kuṇḍalinī*; mentioned in various yogic and tantric texts.¹ When the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, it enters this ‘door’ and rises up the *sushumṇā* to the *brahmarandhra* at its upper end. See **brahmarandhra**.

1. *E.g. Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 3:5, *HYPM* p.286; *Yogakuṇḍalī Upanishad* 2:41–42.

brahmarandhra (S/H) *Lit.* fissure (*randhra*) of *Brahma* or *Brahman*; the opening, aperture, or narrow passage of *Brahman*; a subtle passage, door or gateway in the crown of the head, which is said to lead to the *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’, *i.e.* the thousand-petalled lotus); sometimes understood as the ‘opening of *Brahmā*’, one of the primary Indian deities.

According to yogic texts, beginning at the basal or root *chakra* (*mūlādhāra chakra*) at the base of the spine, *prāṇa* (subtle life energy) flows upwards through the spine, along the central *nāḍī* (channel) known as the *sushumṇā*, and through the other five *chakras*, until it reaches the *brahmarandhra* in the crown of the head. By focusing the attention first in the *mūlādhāra chakra*, and then raising the attention and the *prāṇa* progressively upwards, the attention comes to the *brahmarandhra*, whence the soul leaves the body. This process is known as the awakening and raising of the *kuṇḍalinī*:

Crossing the six *chakras*, (the soul) goes out through the *brahmarandhra*.

Yogashikhā Upanishad 6:33

Here, the soul enjoys the great bliss of the thousand-petalled lotus, the *sahasrāra*:

The *sushumṇā* goes along the spinal cord up to where the *brahmarandhra* is situated. . . . The lotus that is situated in the *brahmarandhra* is called *sahasrāra*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:102–3; *cf.* *SSV* p.70

The *brahmarandhra* should not be confused with the *brahmadvāra* (door of *Brahma*), the opening in the *mūlādhāra chakra* before which lies the ‘sleeping’ *kuṇḍalinī*. When the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, it enters this ‘door’ and rises up the *sushumṇā* to the *brahmarandhra* at its upper end.

According to the *Aitareya Upanishad*, the supreme *Ātman* – who is pure bliss, being, and consciousness – having created all things by His thought, through the power of *māyā* (illusion), entered the human body through the *brahmarandhra*, which is therefore regarded as the door (*dvāra*) into the divine garden (*nāndana*) of bliss.¹ The *Paingala Upanishad* similarly explains that having been created, all the gross and subtle aspects of creation nevertheless required the infusion of the divine presence in order to function. The Creator therefore entered the body through the *brahmarandhra*:

They (gross and subtle elements comprising the body) were unable to move or function without Him. Desiring to infuse life (*chetana*) into them, He came down through the macrocosm and the *brahmarandhra* of the individual souls, situated in their crowns, and entered within them all. Then they (the elements), though inert by nature, were able to engage in their respective functions, as if they were endowed with intelligence.

Paingala Upanishad 1:11

Yogic texts maintain that a soul that passes through this door at the time of death goes to *brahmaloka*, whence it attains liberation by gradual degrees (*kramamukti*). This is known as the *devayāna* (path of the gods). Consequently, at the time of death, a yogi practises a particular *prāṇāyāma* exercise, known as *khecharī-mudrā*, which is intended to guide the *prāṇa* along the *sushumṇā* into the *brahmarandhra*, whence the soul leaves the body.

During life, the yogi's effort is focused on raising the *prāṇa* through the *sushumṇā* and the six *chakras* to the *brahmarandhra*:

(The yogī), having contracted the anus (with the heels pressed against it), having raised the *vāyu* (breath, *prāṇa*) from the *mūlādhāra*, having made three circuits around the *svādhishṭhāna* (sex *chakra*), having reached the *maṇipūraka* (navel *chakra*), having crossed the *anāhata* (heart *chakra*), having controlled the *prāṇa* in the *vishuddhi* (throat *chakra*), . . . and then having entered the *ājñā* (eye centre), meditates there, . . . and enters the *brahmarandhra*; and having meditated there, . . . he recognizes (his own Self) and becomes formless. . . . This is the *Paramahaṃsa* (supreme *Haṃsa*, supreme Self) shining with the resplendence of millions of suns by which the entire world is pervaded.

Haṃsa Upanishad 6–7

Knowing how to enter the *sushumṇā* and make the *prāṇa* flow through the middle channel, he (the yogī) should hold the *prāṇa* in the *brahmarandhra*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:16; cf. *HPSD* p.133

The *prāṇa* in the *sushumṇā* is also known as the *kuṇḍalinī*, often described as being coiled like a serpent in the *mūlādhāra*, ready to rise up. The sound (*nāda*) and light of the subtle elements (*tattvas*) and *prāṇa* are then experienced:

The *sushumṇā*, which runs from the *mūlādhāra* to the *brahmarandhra*, has the radiance of the sun. In its centre lies the *kuṇḍalinī*, shining like millions of lightning flashes and subtle as the thread in the lotus stalk. *Tamas* (darkness, ignorance) is destroyed there. Through seeing it, all sins are destroyed. When the two ears are closed by the tips of the forefingers, a *phutkāra* (booming) sound is heard. When the mind is fixed on it, it sees a blue light between the eyes, as also in the heart.

Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad 1:2; cf. TMU p.186

When the *haṃsa* (i.e. soul) is absorbed in *nāda*, the state beyond the fourth (*turiya*) is reached. *Nāda* is like a column of pure crystal extending from *mūlādhāra* to *brahmarandhra*. It is that which is spoken of as *Brahman* and *Paramātmān*.

Haṃsa Upanishad 9

Whatever is below is a reflection of what lies above. Speaking of a higher passageway or “door” that leads into the *sunṇ* region above the universal mind (*trikuṭī*, *Brahm*), Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes:

Take your soul to the door of *sunṇ*,
and penetrate the *brahmarandhra*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:11.4, SBP p.148

1. *Aitareya Upanishad 1:3.12.*

buddha-chakshus (S), **buddha-cakkhu** (Pa), **sangs rgyas kyi spyān** (T), **fóyǎn** (C), **butsugen** (J) *Lit.* eye (*chakshus*, *spyān*, *yǎn*, *gen*) of an awakened one (*buddha*, *sangs rgyas*, *fó*, *butsu*); the *buddha* eye, the vision of a *buddha*; completely unobstructed vision of all things; the eye that has direct insight into all things (*dharma*s); the eye that sees into the hearts and minds of others, seeing their strengths, their weaknesses, their inclinations, and their degree of spiritual evolution; equivalent to the Pali *samanta-cakkhu* (all-seeing eye, universal eye). In *Mahāyāna* texts, the *buddha-chakshus* replaces *samanta-cakkhu* as the fifth of the *pañcha-chakshus*, although the term is nonetheless used in Pali texts. See **pañcha-chakshus**.

chakshus (S/H/Pu), **cakkhu** (Pa/Pk), **mig, spyān** (T), **yǎn, mù** (C), **gen, moku** (J) *Lit.* eye, vision; physical or spiritual vision; also called *lochana* (S) or *locana* (Pa).

Mystical texts consistently point out that the outer eyes are not designed to look within where God is to be found. As the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* says:

Neither above, nor across, nor in the middle
has anyone grasped Him.
Nothing can be compared with Him
whose name is great glory.
His form cannot be seen,
no one beholds Him with the eyes (*chakshus*).
Those who know Him with heart and mind,
as dwelling in the heart, become immortal.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 4:19–20

Yet the supreme Being sees all with His own divine eye:

The supreme Soul (*Haṃsa*), the ruler of the entire universe,
of all that moves and moves not,
moves outward, becoming embodied
in the city of nine gates (the body).

Swift without feet,
grasping without hands;
Seeing without eyes (*achakshus*),
hearing without ears –
He knows that which is to be known,
yet none know Him.
They call him the primal, infinite Being.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 3:18–19

Various terms have been used to express the supernormal character of spiritual vision as contrasted with the merely physical. The *Samansuttam*, a twentieth-century Jain compilation of ancient *sūtras*, speaks of the greatly revered Mahāvīra, last of the twenty-four Jain *Tīrthankaras* (‘ford makers’, spiritual fathers), as possessing *ananta-cakkhu* (limitless vision):

Lord Mahāvīra was possessed of an all-comprehensive perception,
possessed of a supreme knowledge, took no improper food,
possessed of patience, possessed of steadiness,
the most learned man in the world, free from all possessions,
free from fear, one not going to take another birth.

That supremely wise man lived in no permanent dwelling,
 had crossed over the flood of transmigration,
 had a limitless vision (*ananta-cakkhu*), shown in a supreme manner.

Samansuttam 751–52; cf. SSJV

According to Buddhist psychology, every sense is enlivened by a corresponding faculty of the mind or consciousness. Vision (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*, eye consciousness) is the faculty of mind or consciousness that makes it possible for the sensory input from the physical eyes to be subjectively experienced as sight. Even physical sight, therefore, is understood as a form of consciousness. Buddhist texts use a variety of terms for the spiritual eye or spiritual vision, which is entirely non-material in nature. Although other terms are also used, standard categorizations commonly list five kinds of eye or vision (Pa. *pañca-cakkhu*, S. *pañcha-chakshus*):

1. *Māṃsa-cakkhu* (Pa). *Lit.* eye of flesh; the physical eye.
2. *Dibba-cakkhu* (Pa), *divya-chakshus*, *daiva-chakshus* (S). *Lit.* divine (*dibba*) eye (*cakkhu*); the celestial or heavenly eye.
3. *Paññā-cakkhu* (Pa), *prajñā-chakshus* (S). *Lit.* eye of knowledge or wisdom (*paññā*).
4. *Dharma-chakshus* (S), *dhamma-cakkhu* (Pa). *Lit.* eye that sees the truth of the *Dhamma* (Way) and the truth of the Buddha's teachings; the eye or vision that sees the transitory nature of all things and phenomena (*dhammas*).
5. *Samanta-cakkhu* (Pa). *Lit.* all-encompassing (*samanta*) or universal eye; in *Mahāyāna* texts, the *samanta-cakkhu* is known as the *buddha-chakshus* (S. eye or vision of a *buddha*); the eye or vision that sees the essential oneness in all things and the true nature of everything.

See also: **abhijñā** (7.3), **āvṛitta-chakshus**, **divya-chakshus**, **jñāna-chakshus**, **pañcha-chakshus**.

chante ista (Lakota) *Lit.* eye (*ista*) of the heart (*chante*); the inner eye that sees spiritual things.

The Lakota Sioux holy man Black Elk (1863–1950) speaks of this ‘eye of the heart’ through which he sees, even though at the time of speaking he was blind:

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the Light comes from above, it enlightens my heart and I can see, for the eye of my heart (*chante ista*) sees everything; and through this vision I can help my people. The heart is a sanctuary at the centre of which there is a little space, wherein *Wakan-Tanka* (Great Spirit) dwells, and this is the eye. This is the eye of *Wakan-Tanka* by which He sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, *Wakan-Tanka* cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul shall not return immediately to *Wakan-Tanka*, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the centre of the heart in which is the mind of *Wakan-Tanka*, you must be pure and good, and live in the manner that *Wakan-Tanka* has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the universe within the pocket of his heart (*chante oqnaka*).

Black Elk, in Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian, SLAI p.106

And again:

It is the wish of *Wakan-Tanka* (Great Spirit) that the Light enters into the darkness, that we may see not only with our two eyes, but with the one eye which is of the heart (*chante ista*), and with which we see and know all that is true and good. . . . That we may live as the Great Spirit wishes, and that we may know something of that real world of the Spirit, which is behind this one.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP pp.42–43

charīhnā (H) *Lit.* to ascend, to go up, to climb; hence, *surat charīhnā*, the ascension of the soul (*surat*); expressions of this kind have been commonly used by Swami Shiv Dayal Singh and other mystics:

The soul went up (*surat charīhī*)
and the infinite *Shabd* (Word, Sound) resounded.
Folly was eliminated and the mind absorbed.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:13.6, SBP p.61

Raise (*charīhāvo*) your soul (*surat*) to the inner sky (*gagan*),
and listen to the melody of *Shabd* within.
That alone is worship.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:10.8, SBP p.161

See also: **ascent of the soul** (8.1).

chashm (P) *Lit.* eye, vision, sight; also, charm, amulet; mystically, inner vision, mystical vision. *Chashm* refers both to the all-seeing eye (*baṣar*) of God on His creation, as well as the inner vision of the mystic. In Sufi thinking, the two ultimately become one, as in the *ḥadīth*:

When I (God) love him,
I am his hearing with which he hears,
his seeing (*baṣar*) with which he sees,
his hand with which he strikes,
and his foot with which he walks.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 8:76.509; *AMBF* 42

As a term for the mystic vision of the devotee, *chashm* is used somewhat less than its Arabic counterpart, *‘ayn*. Rūmī uses *chashm* for vision, both mystical and mundane, when pointing out that the outer eyes are of far less value than the inner:

A comrade on the path said to an ascetic (*zāhid*),
“Weep little, lest your eye (*chashm*) comes to harm.”
The ascetic said, “The situation has only two possibilities:
either the eye (*chashm*) sees the divine Beauty, or it does not.
If it sees the light of God, what is there to grieve about? –
How insignificant are the two eyes (*dīdah*)
(to he who is) in union with God!
And if it does not see God, let it go! –
let such a miserable eye (*chashm*) become blind!”

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:445–48; cf. MJR2 pp.244–45

He also says that not only is spiritual development through the awakening of the dormant faculty of inner vision the purpose of human life, even the “whole affair of creation” is only for the sake of “the piercing eye (*chashm-i tez*) and the seer (*naẓẓār*)”:

If there were no ears to receive the message from the Unseen,
no announcer (prophet) would have brought a revelation from heaven.
And if there had been no eyes (*dīd ḥā*) to see the works of God,
neither would the sky have revolved,
nor would the earth have smiled (with greenery).
The declaration, “*Lawlāka* (‘but for you’),”
means that the whole affair of creation is for the sake
of the piercing eye (*chashm-i tez*) and the seer (*naẓẓār*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:1659–61; cf. MJR6 p.350

“*Lawlāka*”, here, refers to the *ḥadīth*, “But for you (Muḥammad), I would not have created the heavens.”¹ Rūmī explains this to mean that the creation was created for the sake of the one who develops the “piercing eye”.

See also: ‘*ayn* (► 1), *chashm* (7.2).

1. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 546, in *MJR* 7 p.275.

chashm-i dil (P) *Lit.* eye (*chashm*) of the heart (*dil*); the eye of the spiritual heart, the eye of the soul; inner vision, mystical vision; equivalent to the Arabic, ‘*ayn al-qalb*.

Hātīf-i Iṣfahānī speaks of the “eye of the heart” that sees everything as a part of the divine One, in love of whom the soul becomes completely lost:

Open the eye of the heart (*chashm-i dil*) to see the soul,
so that you may see what cannot be seen.
If you turn towards the domain of love,
you will see all horizons as rose gardens. . . .
What you see is what the heart desires,
and what the heart desires is what you see. . . .

If you give all you have to love,
I will be an unbeliever if you should suffer.
If you consign your soul to the fire,
you will see love as the alchemy of your soul.
You will pass through a narrow passageway,
and see the broad expanse of the placeless domain.
You will hear what has never been heard,
and you will see what the eye (*chashm*) never saw.
You will be brought to where you see the world
and what is in it as One.
With heart and soul, you will practise love towards the One,
till you see directly with the eye of certitude (‘*ayn al-yaqīn*).
For there is only One, and nothing but Him;
He is alone: there is no god but He.

Hātīf-i Iṣfahānī, Dīvān, DHI p.18; cf. in SSE14 pp.117–19

Rūmī points to the clarity and certainty that is the natural consequence of such inner vision:

He who sees with the eye of the heart (*chashm-i dil*) –
his eye (*chashm*) will behold with the very essence of vision (‘*ayn*).

His soul is not content with traditional belief:
 his certainty comes from the eye of the heart (*chashm-i dil*).
Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:4405–6; cf. MJR6 p.502

See also: ‘ayn (►1), **chashm** (7.2).

dar (P), **bāb** (A/P) *Lit.* door, gate, entrance; in Sufi terminology, the inner door at which the devotee gathers his concentration, meets the divine beloved, and gains entry to the spiritual realms; also, the *shaykh* or master, as a door through whom access to the spiritual realms may be gained.

Rūmī writes in many places of the inner door by which the soul leaves the body. “The door (*bāb*) of his inward eye (*chashm-i ghayb*) was opened,”¹ he writes of a character in one of his stories. “Open new doors (*dar ḥā*) in this rented house,”² he also advises. The Companions of the Prophet, he says, were also led through this door from this world to the next:

God has opened the door (*dar*) to the Companions,
 and led them to the high-seat in the palace.
Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:2314; cf. MJR6 p.387

Similarly, relating the story of a fictitious *shaykh*, he begins:

Once upon a time there was a *shaykh*, a guide (*rah-namā*),
 a heavenly candle on the face of the earth –
 One like a prophet among religious communities,
 an opener of the door (*dar*) of the garden of paradise.
 The Prophet said that a *shaykh* who has attained (the End)
 is like a prophet among his people.³
Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:1772–74; cf. MJR4 p.99

And Rūmī addresses his own master who had opened not just the inner door to escape from the body, but every “door” between this world and the Supreme:

O you who have opened a thousand doors (*hazār dar*) for me!
 O you who have put the key in my hand!
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 520:5537,
 KSD1 p.302, DSTR p.76; cf. in SSE4 p.90*

What stands between the seeker and the divine Reality, is the content of his own mind and thought processes. His mind and thought have become heavy, held down by the impurities of material life. The inner door, says Rūmī,

will only be opened when the seeker knocks. Only when the wings of the higher mind are exercised can the falcon of the soul fly back to the wrist of the divine king:

When you knock at the door of Reality (*dar-i Ma'nī*),
 it will be opened to you:
 Beat the wings of your thought (*fikr*),
 in order that you may become a king's falcon.
 The wings of your thought (*fikr*)
 have become mud-stained and heavy;
 Because you are a clay eater, clay has become to you as bread.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2870–71; cf. MJR2 p.157

Nonetheless, like a man seeking water while standing in a river, the worldly person seeks solace by knocking at every door but the inner door, the door of his own heart (*dar-i dil*):

Attend to your own head, abandon giddy-headedness;
 Go, knock at the door of your heart (*dar-i dil*):
 why do you knock at every other door (*dar*)?
 Up to the knees in the river water, you are heedless of yourself,
 seeking water here and there.
 Water in front, and behind, too, an unfailing supply of water –
 but before your eyes is “a barrier” and “behind them a barrier”.⁴ ...

He is mad with thirst for water, and it is in front of him:
 he is in the water and unconscious of the running water. ...
 His asking, “Where?” becomes a screen for him:
 it becomes a cloud for him over the radiance of the sun.
 His sensual eye (*chashm-i bad*)
 is a bandage over his inner eye (*band-i chashm*),
 and his efforts to remove the barrier have become a barrier.
 His self-consciousness is a plug to his inner ear (*band-i gūsh*).
 Direct your consciousness towards God alone,
 O you who are bewildered by Him.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:1074–76, 1079, 1082–83; cf. MJR6 p.66

Such a person, continues Rūmī, is like a rider astride his horse asking the whereabouts of his mount; or like a pearl enclosed by the oyster shell asking where the sea might be.⁵ His spiritual vision is blinded by his material vision; the exercise of intellect in asking questions hinders the growth of spiritual understanding; consciousness of his self blinds him to the divine Self.

Again metaphorically, the ultimate door at which the soul, as a spiritual beggar, must knock is God's door. This door includes all other doors, and he who knocks sincerely will always receive an answer in abundance:

Who can knock at this door of flowing mercy (*dar-i raḥmat niśār*),
without receiving a hundred springs in response?

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:4239; cf. MJR6 p.492

Become a dweller at My door (*dar*) and be homeless:
Do not pretend to be a candle, be a moth,
that you may taste the savour of Life.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:413–14; cf. MJR6 p.27

Ḥāfiẓ writes that there is no better goal in life than to withdraw from the body and die to self at the beloved's door. It is the process of dying while living:

To die at this door (*dar*) in the heat of slavery is better,
believe me, than to gain the wealth of the whole world.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.231, DIH p.370; cf. DHWC (494:5) p.813, in SSE4 p.90

So go on knocking, counsels Sa'dī, for one day the door will open:

He who constantly knocks at the door (*dar*)
will be unexpectedly successful one day.
You must exert yourself in order to attain your heart's desire:
you must sit up all night to see the sunrise.

Sa'dī, Tayyibāt 20:9–10, KSSS p.246; cf. TOS p.30

Sitting up all night is an allusion to nightly meditation, seeking the dawning of the inner spiritual light.

Repentance (*tawbat*), the turning of the soul to the Divine, is also portrayed as a door because it marks the beginning of the spiritual journey:

The door (*bāb*) is repentance (*tawbah*), because it is the entrance by
which the first approach to the presence of the nearness of God is made.

Al-Qāshānī, Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyah 33, GSTA pp.13–14; cf. GST p.9

It is a door that is always open to the seeker:

By the mercy of God, paradise has eight doors (*dar*) –
one of those eight is the door of repentance (*dar-i tawbat*), O son.
All the others are sometimes open, sometimes shut,
but the door of repentance (*dar-i tawbat*) is always open.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:2506–7; cf. MJR4 p.410

See also: **dar** (7.1), **dargāh** (7.5).

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* V:932, *MJR6* p.58.
2. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* VI:4658; cf. *MJR6* p.515.
3. Ḥadīth, *AMBF* 224.
4. *Qur'ān* 36:9.
5. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* V:1077–80, *MJR6* p.66.

darīchah (P) *Lit.* little door; hence, window; in Sufism, a ‘door’ that opens in the heart permitting the seeker to see the divine light; the opening of the heart to the divine light. See **dar**.

daswān dwār, daswān duār, daswīn galī (H), **dasam duār, daswā duār, daswai dar** (Pu) *Lit.* the tenth (*daswān*) door (*dwār*); the tenth (*daswān*) lane or alley (*galī*); esoterically, the eye centre, the subtle ‘opening’ in the head above and behind the physical eyes, through which the soul leaves the body and passes into higher regions.

Indian mystics have described the human body as a house with ten doors or gates. Nine (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and the two lower apertures) open out;¹ one opens inside. This ‘tenth’ door is a reflection of the ‘gateway’ between *trikuṭī* and the purely spiritual realm above it, also called *daswān dwār*.

A number of *sants* (saints) have used the expression:

Close off the nine gates (*nao dar*),
and restrain the wandering mind:
Come to dwell in the home (*nij ghar*) of the tenth (*daswai*) (gate).
There, the *anhad Shabd* (ceaseless Music) vibrates day and night:
through the *guru*’s teachings (*gurmat*), the *Shabd* is heard.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 124, AGK

He blew the breath of life into the musical instrument of the body,
and revealed the nine doors (*nao duāre*),
but He kept the tenth (*daswā*) hidden.
Through the *gurdwāra* (*guru*’s gate),
some are blessed with loving faith,
and the tenth door (*daswā duār*) is revealed to them.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 922, AGK

I withdrew from this body of mine
and attached myself to the Melody within.

Passing through the tenth door (*daswān duār*),
 the flame of my soul was awakened.
 Unimpeded, my soul now travels within like flowing oil,
 and the light of day has dawned.

Palū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍalī 170, PSB1 p.72

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh refers to this focal point simply as “the tenth (*daswān*)”. By means of the divine Music, the soul can return to its native home. Here, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh is referring to the region of *daswān dwār* that lies beyond the universal mind:

The master reveals to you the five melodies
 and shows you your real home (*ghar*)
 within the home (*ghar*) (of the body).
 Attach your consciousness (*surat*) to the Melody (*Dhun*) now
 and go from this home (*ghar*) to that home (*ghar*) –
 The one that is unfathomable and boundless,
 the one you will see after crossing the tenth (*daswān*).

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:10.3–5,
 SBP p.161; cf. SBPS pp.228–29*

See also: **daswān dwār** (4.1), **dvāra**.

1. See **nau dwār** (5.1).

dharma-chakshus (S), **dhamma-cakkhu** (Pa), **chos kyi mig** (T), **fǎyǎn** (C), **hōgen** (J) *Lit. dharma* (*chos, fǎ, hō*) eye (*chakshus, mig, yǎn, gen*); eye of *dharma*; the eye that sees the *Dharma* (Way, Truth); the eye that sees the truth of the Buddha’s teachings and of the four noble truths (the existence of suffering; the origin of suffering, which is craving and clinging to desires; the cessation of suffering by putting an end to craving; and the path or means to end suffering, which is the eightfold noble path); the eye that sees all things and phenomena (*dharma*s) for what they really are – impermanent, being born, growing, aging, and fading into extinction; an awareness enjoyed by noble disciples (*ariya-puggala*), beginning with the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) – one who has entered the supramundane or transcendental path (*lokuttara-magga*). See **pañcha-chakshus**.

dibbur penimi (He) *Lit. inner* (*penimi*) speech (*dibbur*); the spiritual faculty that hears the primordial Speech (*Dibbur kadmon*), which is the divine Word that brought the creation into being, that sustains it, and is experienced by the mystic as an inner spiritual sound or music.

The thirteenth-century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia maintained that devotees ascend from the level of outer audible speech to an experience of inner speech, ultimately merging into the primordial divine Speech, the *Dibbur kadmon*:

And they ascend from light (*aur*) to light (*aur*) . . . to the union, until their inner speech (*dibbur penimi*) returns, cleaving to the primordial Speech (*Dibbur kadmon*) which is the source of all speech, and they further ascend from speech to speech until the inner human speech (*dibbur penimi*) (is a) power in itself, and he (the individual practitioner) prepares himself to receive the divine Speech (*Dibbur elyoni*).

Abraham Abulafia, Ve-zot le-Yehudah, VYAA p.16, in MEAA p.83

See also: **Dibbur kadmon** (3.1).

dīdah (P) *Lit.* eye, vision, sight; mystically, mystic vision, the faculty of inner vision, as in such expressions as *ahl-i dīdah* (people of vision, mystics) and *dīdah-i dil* (eye of the heart, inner eye). ‘Irāqī defines *dīdah* as the “divine awareness (*iṭṭilāʿ-i ilāhī*) of all the mystical states of the devotee”.¹

Rūmī points out that knowing the truth by direct, personal, inner vision is far superior to an intellectual and conceptual knowledge acquired from scriptures, however elevated and pure those scriptures may be:

The Prophet said that this world,
substantial in appearance, is but a sleeper’s dream.²
You have accepted this according to tradition:
Wayfarers have seen it through inner vision (*dīdah*),
without relation to the Prophet.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:1733–34; cf. MJR4 p.97

This inner eye is the “real eye”, for it sees God, who is the inner essence of every human being:

Man is really the inner eye (*dīdah*),
the rest of him is mere shell,
That eye (*dīdah*) is the real eye (*dīdah*) that sees the Friend (*Dūst*).

Unattributed; cf. in RRS pp.126–27

It is with his inner eye, says Sarmad, that he has seen the heavenly worlds:

With the eye of my heart (*dīdah-i dil*),
I have seen the beauty of both the worlds.
I have become a scale, weighing well their good and bad.

Sarmad, Rubāʿī 222, RISP p.32; cf. RIS p.38

Like other Sufi terms for inner vision, *dīdah* implies a vision in which subject and object are merged. The Beloved is seen through the Beloved's own eye:

Let me borrow an eye (*dīdah*) from You,
to gaze upon Your face;
For my own frail gaze (*naẓar*)
is unworthy of looking at You.

Maghribī, Dīvān 124:1201, DSMR p.163; cf. in SSE1 p.60

Look at Her through Her (the Beloved's) eye (*dīdah*),
if you want to see Her as soul and life.

ʿAṭṭār, Dīvān 399:6187, DASN p.330; cf. in SSE1 p.60

The divine Beloved thus loves Himself through His lover; He worships Himself through His devotee. Hence, Maghribī depicts God as gazing at Himself through the “eye (*dīdah*)” of the devotee:

In your own eye (*dīdah*),
Your Beauty unveiled itself;
In Your own eye (*dīdah*),
You saw Your own countenance in full view.

Maghribī, Dīvān 2:21, DSMR p.67; cf. in SSE1 p.59

See also: **baṣar**, **chashm**, **naẓar**.

1. ʿIrāqī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, RLRI p.80.
2. Ḥadīth, AMBF 223.

dīpak(a) (S/H/Pu), **dīp(a)** (S/Pa/H/Pu) *Lit.* flame, lamp, moonlight; an earthenware lamp with a cotton wick dipped in oil, ghee or vegetable oil, and used both domestically as well as in religious ceremonies; metaphorically, something that imparts the light of understanding; also, a summer afternoon *rāga*; mystically, the inner light, the lamp of inner knowledge or wisdom.

The term is favoured by the *sants* (saints) whose writings are preserved in the *Ādi Granth*:

Like a lamp (*dīpak*) lit in the darkness,
the spiritual wisdom of the *guru* dispels ignorance.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 39, AGK

The Word (*Sabad*) is a lamp (*dīpak*),
illuminating the three worlds.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 664, AGK

When, by his grace, the true *guru* is met,
the lamp (*dīpak*) is lit within the temple of the mind.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 235, AGK

The *Mahāyāna* Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 CE) is also fond of the metaphor. A steady mind, he says, is like the steady flame of a lamp:

Right concentration (*samyak-samādhi*) makes the mind pure, free from stains (*kashāya*) and distraction (*vikshepa*). . . . It is like a lamp (*dīpa*) inside a house, sheltered from the wind, that burns brightly.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra 36, T25 1509:226b, TVW3 p.1155

A scattered mind is unable to understand things clearly:

The distracted mind (*vikshepa-chitta*) is like a lamp (*dīpa*) in the wind, which has light but does not illuminate objects. It is the same for the wisdom (*prajñā*) in a distracted mind. Wisdom is the root (*mūla*) of all good *dharma*s (*kushala-dharma*). In order to realize this wisdom, it is first necessary to concentrate the mind: it is only afterwards that one will realize it.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra 50, T25 1509:304a, TVW5 p.1854

Therefore, spiritual teachers, in this case Buddhist *bodhisattvas*, seek only those on whom their spiritual light will not be wasted:

There are three kinds of universe (*lokadhātu*): the pure (*parishuddha*), the impure (*aparishuddha*), and the mixed ones (*mishra*). Of the beings living in these three types of universe, some have the privilege of being able to be saved; it is those that the *bodhisattva* takes hold of. One lights a lamp (*dīpa*) for those who have eyes and not for blind people (*andha*); in the same way, the *bodhisattva* brings to fruition only those who already fulfil the aims and conditions (of salvation) or who are beginning to fulfil them.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra 20, T25 1509:418c4; cf. TVW5 p.2022

See also: **jyotis**.

divya-chakshus, **daiva-chakshus** (S/H), **dibba-cakkhu** (Pa), **dib-chakshu** (Pu), **lha'i mig** (T), **tiānyǎn** (C), **tengen** (J) *Lit.* divine (*divya*, *daiva*, *lha'i*, *tiān*) eye (*chakshus*, *mig*, *yǎn*, *gen*); the heavenly or celestial eye; the inner eye, inner vision, divine vision; the faculty of spiritual vision; in Buddhism, one of the six (or sometimes five) supernormal powers (Pa. *abhiññā*, S. *abhiññā*) attained by the *arahanta* (enlightened one) and one of the three forms of

supernatural knowledge (*tevijjā*); the eye that can see the past and future births of others, according to their *karma*; the eye that can see causes and effects; the eye that can see everything happening in the world; the eye that can see in physical darkness, over long distances, and through obstructions; a kind of high-order clairvoyance; also called *yathākamūpaga-ñāṇa* (Pa. knowledge of rebirth according to *kamma*) and *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa* (Pa. knowledge of vanishing and reappearing).

In the Vedic tradition, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* points out that the *daiva-chakshus* is actually the mind itself. The mind is its own eye, so to speak, able to see within on the inner planes:

The one who is aware of thinking is the self (*ātman*); and the mind is his divine eye (*daiva-chakshus*). Seeing all those heavenly things with the heavenly eye (*daiva-chakshus*) of the mind, he rejoices.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 8:12.5; cf. VE p.723

By its very nature, the ‘eye’ of the Divine, the eye of the supreme Being, is all-seeing. It is the nature of the universal Consciousness, and is the basis of the soul’s faculty of inner vision:

It is not possible to see Me simply with your own eyes (*sva-chakshus*). I therefore give you the power of divine vision (*divya-chakshus*). With that, behold My power as Lord of all.

Bhagavad Gītā 11:8; cf. BGT

In the *Mahābhārata*, the blind king Dhṛitrāshṭra, father of the Kauravas, in his palace at Hastināpura (northeast of modern Delhi), is anxious to know how the climactic battle at Kurukshetra is proceeding, hundreds of miles away. As the result of a gift from Ṛishi Vyāsa, Saṃjaya, advisor to the king, has *divya-chakshus* (divine vision). Exercising his power to see events at a distance, he is able to report the news of the death of Dhṛitrāshṭra’s one hundred sons by the army of Kṛishṇa and Arjuna. The account of the battle includes the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which is set as part of Saṃjaya’s response to Dhṛitrāshṭra’s request for an account of what is happening on the battlefield.

See also: **pañcha-chakshus**, **siddhi** (7.3), **tīsar nayan**.

divya-dṛishṭi (S/H), **dib diṣṭ**, **dib dṛiṣṭ** (Pu) *Lit.* divine (*divya*) vision (*dṛishṭi*); divine eye; the eye of divine knowledge; the soul’s faculty of spiritual vision; inner vision.

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* speaks of various *haṭha* yoga practices as conducive to the development of both miraculous powers (*siddhis*) and inner vision:

By practice of *netī-kriyā* one obtains *khecharī-siddhi* (levitation). It destroys disorders of phlegm and produces inner vision (*divya-dṛishṭi*).

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:51; cf. GSV p.10

Speaking metaphorically of the spiritual form of the *guru*, Tulsīdās says that this form unfolds the inner vision (*divya-dṛishṭi*):

I greet the pollen-like dust of the lotus feet (*pad padum*) of my *guru*, refulgent, fragrant, and flavoured with love. It is a lovely powder of the life-giving herb, which allays the many attendant ills of mundane existence. It adorns the body of a lucky person even as white ashes beautify the person of Lord *Shiva*, and brings forth sweet blessings and joys. It cleanses the dirt from the beautiful mirror of the devotee's heart; when applied to the forehead in the form of a *tilak* (a religious mark), it attracts many virtues.

The lustre of the nails of the holy *guru*'s feet is like the brightness of gemstones; when remembered, divine vision (*divya-dṛishṭi*) is unfolded. This lustre disperses the darkness of ignorance. Blessed is he in whose heart it shines! By its very appearance the bright eyes (*bimal bilochan*) of the mind (*hī*, heart) are opened, and the attendant evils and sufferings of the night of mundane existence disappear.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:5.1–4; cf. RCML pp.3–4

Guru Amardās says that such vision arises through the grace of God and the *guru*:

Says Nānak, these eyes were blind:
but meeting the *satguru*,
they became all-seeing (*dib dṛiṣṭ*, acquired divine sight).

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 922, AGK

One whose spiritual vision (*dib dṛiṣṭ*) is awakened,
his doubt is driven out.

By *guru*'s grace,
he obtains the supreme status (*param pad*).

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1016, AGK

One who is a buyer of the Lord's Name finds it,
and obtains the jewel of contemplation.

He opens the doors deep within,
and through the eyes of divine vision (*dib diṣṭ*),
beholds the treasure of liberation (*mukat*).

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 425, AGK

See also: **divya-chakshus**.

divya-netra (S/H) *Lit.* the divine (*divya*) eye (*netra*); inner spiritual vision.

See also: **divya-chakshus**, **shiva-netra**.

divya-shrotra (S), **dibba-sota** (Pa), **lha'i rna ba** (T), **tiāněr** (C), **tenni** (J) *Lit.* divine (*divya*, *lha'i*, *tiān*) hearing (*shrotra*, *sota*, *rna ba*, *ěr*); celestial hearing, heavenly hearing; in Buddhism, the divine ear that can hear all sounds, subtle or gross, far or near; clairaudience; one of the six (or sometimes five) supernormal powers (Pa. *abhiññā*) developed by an *arahanta* (one who has attained enlightenment); corresponds to *dibba-cakkhu* (Pa) or *divya-chakshus* (S), the divine, celestial or heavenly eye that can see the past and future births of oneself and others, as the unfolding of their *kamma* (Pa. deeds, actions).

Patañjali says in his *Yoga Sūtras* that *divya-shrotra* is developed by concentration on the silence of the inner space, the 'space' of one's own inner being:

By *saṃyama* (deep concentration) on the relationship
between the ear and (inner) space (*ākāśa*),
divine hearing (*divya-shrotra*) is obtained.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:42

Buddhist descriptions of the faculty, each following a similar pattern, appear in all the main collections of *suttas*. In the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha describes to King Ajātasattu the life of a contemplative and homeless monk:

It is as if, O king, a man were on a highway and were to hear the sound of a kettledrum, or a *tabor*, or a conch, or cymbals, or tom-toms, he would know, "That is the sound of a kettledrum, . . . of a *tabor*, . . . of a conch, . . . of cymbals, . . . or of tom-toms." In the same way – his mind being concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, devoid of evil, pliant, malleable, steady, and imperturbable – when the monk directs and inclines it to the divine ear (*dibba-sota*) element, he hears – by means of the divine ear (*dibba-sota*) element, purified and surpassing that of human beings – both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near

or far. This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Dīgha Nikāya 2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta, PTS D1 p.79; cf. DNTB

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* provides a little more detail:

Bodhisattvas develop the unobstructed celestial ear (*tiāněr*), fully matured, far-reaching, penetratingly sensitive, free from blockage, perceiving without hindrance, thoroughly developed, able to hear or not hear all sounds at will.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 28, T10 279:230b29–c2, FOSC p.865

See also: **chakshus**.

ḍiyā' (A), **ẓiyā'** (P) *Lit.* light, radiance, brightness, luminosity, splendour; divine light, inner light, spiritual light; sometimes used instead of *nūr*, the more common word for light, to denote a higher or purer light, as in *ḍiyā' al-Ḥaqq* (radiance of God), which refers to the inherently radiant being of God. *Ḍiyā'* is usually employed for a light source that is self-luminous, self-effulgent or luminous of its own nature, like the sun. *Nūr* is also used for that which is self-luminous but, in addition, for that which is luminous by derivative or reflected light, like the moon. Thus, the *Qur'ān* says:

It is He who made the sun a shining glory (*ḍiyā'*),
and the moon a light (*nūr*).

Qur'ān 10:5; cf. AYA

This distinction illustrates the notion that each level of the creation is a reflection of the level above it. The divine creative power emanates from God as light and sound and, as it descends through the successive levels of creation, it becomes a reflection of the original light, then a reflection of a reflection of that light. Everything, even in human life, has its reflections or counterfeits. True teachings are reflected in false teachings: true mystics are given a bad name by imposters, charlatans, and so on.

Rūmī alludes to this passage when writing of his close disciple, companion and successor-to-be, Chalabī Ḥusām al-Dīn – meaning 'Sword (*ḥusām*) of Religion'. Rūmī often calls him *Ẓiyā'* or *Ẓiyā' al-Ḥaqq* ('Light of Truth', 'Light of God'). Just as the sun's sword, with which it dispels darkness, is its light, so does Ḥusām cut through or dispel spiritual darkness, revealing the Truth:

I called you, *Ẓiyā'*, Ḥusām al-Dīn ('Sword of Religion')
because you are the 'sun':

These two words are epithets, descriptive of the sun.
 For, mark you, this sword and this radiance (*ẓiyā'*) are one:
 the sun's sword (beam) is certainly of the radiance (*ẓiyā'*).
Nūr (light) belongs to the moon, and *ẓiyā'* (radiance) to the sun:
 read this in the *Qur'ān*.
 The *Qur'ān* has called the sun, *ẓiyā'*, O father,
 and it has called the moon, *nūr*: Consider this!
 Since the sun is more exalted even than the moon,
 know, then, that *ẓiyā'* is superior to *nūr* in dignity.
 Many a one did not see the way in the moonlight,
 but it became visible as soon as the sun arose.
 The sun displays all objects of exchange perfectly:
 Of necessity, markets are held in the daytime,
 in order that the false coin and good money
 might come into view, and that the merchant
 might be immune from swindling and trickery.
 The sun rose until its light came to perfection on the earth,
 a universal mercy¹ to the traders;
 But, to the false coiner, it is hateful and grievous,
 because, by it, his money and wares are made unsaleable.
 Hence the false coin is the mortal foe of the moneychanger.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:16–26, MJR4 pp.273–74

Ḥusām al-Dīn was probably Rūmī's scribe for much of the *Maṣnavī*, as well as a source of encouragement to him to continue with his herculean task. Rūmī mentions him in many places, almost invariably adding the epithet, *Ẓiyā' al-Ḥaqq*,² and speaking of Ḥusām al-Dīn as a completely realized soul.

Rūmī also speaks of the divine radiance in connection with the biblical story of Moses and the burning bush.³ He interprets Moses' experience as an inner experience of divine radiance:

But was it not Moses who saw the light
 from a bush of radiant brightness (*ẓiyā'*)?
 What a burning summons were its flames!

Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 258:2911–12, KSD1 p.162; cf. in SSE4 p.16

In fact, all light, says Rūmī, originates from the Divine:

O soul, from Him all light does flow,
 all heaven's brightness (*ẓiyā'*) but a reflection of His glow;
 From Him, the laughter every flower shows,
 from Him, the towering cypresses in rows,
 from Him, the scented jasmine garden grows.

Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 604:6362, KSD2 p.44, in SSE4 p.16

The realms above the physical are illuminated by their own inherent light, a reflection of the essential divine light. Ni'mat Allāh Valī also writes that *ẓiyā'* is a characteristic of the "imaginal realm (*'ālam-i miśāl*)", also called *'ālam-i khayāl* (realm of imagination), equivalent to the astral realm of English terminology. The brightness here, he says, is of two types. One is akin to spiritual darkness, and the other stems from the manifestation in this realm of mysteries from yet higher levels:

Brightness (*ẓiyā'*) represents the imaginal realm (*'ālam-i miśāl*); it is an intermediate realm, which divides the realm of spirit from that of the body. It is a (self-)luminous and spiritual realm. . . .

There are two types of brightness (*ẓiyā'*). One is opaque and adjacent to darkness, the other is of a subtle nature, being a manifestation of the mysteries of the unseen realm in the guise of imagination (*khayāl*). Both types of brightness (*ẓiyā'*) combine in the imaginal realm.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV3 p.410, in SSE4 p.17

Elsewhere, he adds that "brightness (*ẓiyā'*) . . . mediates between light and darkness".⁴

See also: **nūr**.

1. *Qur'ān* 21:107.
2. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:428, 2934, *MJR2* pp.26, 160; II:3, 1123, 2282, *MJR2* pp.222, 279, 339; III:1, 2110, *MJR4* pp.5, 118; IV:1, 16, 754, 2075, 2077, 3423, 3824, *MJR4* pp.273, 313, 386–87, 461, 482; V:1–2, *MJR6* p.4; VI:1, 90, 183, 1202, 1991, 2010, *MJR6* pp.258, 262, 267, 325, 369, 370. Only in VI:1 and VI:90 does Rūmī omit the epithet, *Ẓiyā' al-Ḥaqq*.
3. *Exodus* 3:1ff.
4. Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, *Rasā'il, RNV3* p.239, in *SSE4* p.18.

do-dal(a) kamal(a) (S/H), **do dal kanwal** (Pu/U) *Lit.* two-petalled (*do-dala*) lotus (*kamala*); also called, the *dvi-dala* (two-petalled) and *ājñā padma* (command lotus); the uppermost lotus, centre or *chakra* of *piṇḍa*; the headquarters of mind and spirit in the body, situated behind the eyes; also called the *ājñā chakra* (command centre) and the eye centre. Commonly referred to as the third eye, though the third eye is also used to denote the *aṣṭa-dal kamal* (eight-petalled lotus), a centre on the threshold of the astral realms.

In the yogic tradition, the *Shiva Saṃhitā* eulogizes the virtues of concentration at the two-petalled lotus. All the benefits accruing from concentration on the lower centres automatically come to a yogi who focuses his attention at this centre and, at the time of death, he goes to the Supreme (*Paramātmān*):

All the fruits described as resulting from the contemplation of the other five lotuses, are obtained through the knowledge of this one (*i.e.* *ājñā* lotus) alone.

The wise one, who continually practises contemplation of this *ājñā padma* (lotus) becomes free from the mighty chain of desires, and enjoys happiness.

When, at the time of death, the *yogī* contemplates this lotus, leaving this life, that holy one becomes absorbed in the *Paramātmān*.

He who contemplates on this (centre), standing or walking, sleeping or waking, is not touched by sins, even if it were possible for him to do sinful deeds.

By his own exertion, the *yogī* becomes free from the chain (of desire). The importance of contemplation on the two-petalled (*dvi-dala*) cannot be fully described. Even the gods like *Brahmā*, and so on, have learnt only a portion of its grandeur.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:115–19; cf. SSV p.72

Maharaj Sawan Singh, as recorded in a diary written by his personal secretary Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, also speaks of the two-petalled lotus as the soul's point of departure from the body:

In the evening *satsang*, hymns from various saints were read. While commenting on a well-known hymn by saint Dādū Dayāl, the master remarked that after vacating the nine apertures and crossing the two-petalled lotus (*do dal kanwal*), ... one reaches the first stage *i.e.* *sahans dal kanwal*, which is the thousand-petalled lotus.

Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, With the Three Masters, WTM1 p.77

A verse sung by a devotee of Ramakrishna, which again charts the progress of the soul of a yogi through the lower *chakras*, observes that when the mind remains focused at the two-petalled lotus, then it remains detached from the play of life in this world, and enjoys life as a witness:

Above it, in the forehead, is the two-petalled lotus (*dvi-dal padma*).
When the mind remains permanently fixed there,
resting on the two petals (*dvi-dal*),
then it witnesses the sport of existence.

Unattributed, in Kathāmṛta 3:4.1; cf. SRK3

The *do dal kanwal* behind the eyes is a reflection in *piṇḍa* of another *do dal kanwal* in the lower part of *trikuṭī*, which, in turn, is a reflection of a two-petalled lotus in a purely spiritual realm that *sants* have called *bhanwar guphā*.

See also: **ājñā chakra** (5.1), **eye centre**.

door A means of opening or closing an entrance; esoterically, the eye centre or single eye; the centre, focus or headquarters of the mind and soul in the physical body, situated in the forehead, behind and slightly above the two eyes, having no physical location, but lying in a more subtle mental plane; the point at which the attention is to be concentrated in order to contact the divine Word and ascend to higher realms; the thinking centre; the centre from which the attention spreads out into the body and the world during the waking state; also called, the tenth door (H. *daswān dwār*).

Metaphorically, it is called a door because it is the exit point through which the soul and mind can leave the body, either at death or beforehand, by means of spiritual practice. Being of a mental or subtle character, mental means are required to open it. This entails the repetition of a particular 'formula' or series of words or names, over and over again, with the attention of the mind fixed within at the point between the two eyebrows. This may be called 'knocking' at the inner door. However, the door is only opened from the inside, when the aspirant is ready. The spiritual practitioner has therefore been likened to a beggar who knocks at the house of a rich man in the hope that the owner will have compassion and, opening the door, will pass some of his riches on to him.

The notion of a door that is open or shut is also metaphorical. Whether the inner door is 'open' or 'shut' is a matter of concentrated attention at the point of focus. It can equally be said that the door is always open, but the attention is scattered outside, and does not enter in. It is perhaps to this door that Jesus is alluding when he says:

Ask, and it shall be given you;
 seek, and you shall find;
 knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
 For every one that asks shall receive;
 and he that seeks shall find;
 and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.

Matthew 7:7–8; cf. KJV

He means that all those who seek God with sincerity will ultimately be led to Him. They will be led to this door and to the path that leads back to God. Everyone who knocks with love, devotion and humility at this inner door will one day find that it has been opened for them. In John's gospel, Jesus says that he himself is the door:

Verily, verily, I say unto you,
 I am the door of the sheep. . . .
 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,
 and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

John 10:7, 9, KJV

He is the means by which his disciples can “enter in”, can attain salvation and can come and go from the body at will, finding “pasture” or spiritual nourishment in the heavenly realms. Since Jesus was understood to have been a human incarnation of the Word, the Word itself was also known as the “Door”, an allusion to the sayings of Jesus in some of the early Christian,¹ gnostic,² and Manichaean³ texts.

There also seem to be references to this inner door in the *Book of Revelation*, although the content of the book is undoubtedly obscure. According to the narrative, Jesus (in a spiritual form) tells the writer to write to the various churches. To the Philadelphians he is to say (among other things):

Behold, I have set before you an open door,
and no man can shut it:
For you have a little strength,
and have kept my Word, and have not denied my name.

Book of Revelation 3:8; cf. KJV

Later, the same writer maintains:

After this I looked,
and, behold, a door was opened in heaven:
And the first Voice which I heard
was as it were of a trumpet talking with me;
which said, “Come up hither,
and I will show you things that will come to pass.”
And immediately I was in the spirit.

Book of Revelation 4:1–2; cf. KJV

Evidently, the “door” that is “opened in heaven” is of a spiritual nature, for the soul hears the Voice of God like the music of a trumpet. And as a result, “immediately I was in the spirit.”

The saviour is on the inside and the disciple is on the outside of this door. In a ‘letter’ to the Laodiceans, it is Jesus who stands at the door with an open invitation to his disciples to enter in:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:
if any man hear my Voice, and open the door,
I will come in to him,
and will sup with him, and he with me.

Book of Revelation 3:20, KJV

Among the Christian mystics, Richard Rolle speaks of how the opening of this “heavenly door” led him to see the “face” of the beloved, and experience the “heat” of eternal love:

In the course of time, I was given great growth in spiritual joy. Three years passed, except for three or four months, from the beginning of the change in my life and of my mind to the opening of the heavenly door, and the revealing of his face, so that the eyes of the heart could contemplate and see the way by which it could find the beloved and long continually for him. But the door remained open for nearly a year longer, before I could truly feel in my heart the heat of everlasting love.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 15; cf. FLML (1:15) p.70, FLRR p.92

Spiritual progress is not like travelling in this world, where a person knows when he has reached his destination. In spiritual life, the soul is setting sail into unknown seas, and it is difficult for it to know where it has actually reached. Therefore, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* points out:

Many believe that they have entered within the spiritual door when, in reality, they are still standing without. And there they will remain until they learn to seek the door in all humility. Some find it rapidly, and enter within sooner than others, not because they possess special gifts or unusual merit, but simply because the doorkeeper chooses to let them in.

Book of Privy Counselling 9; cf. CU (14) pp.162–63, CUCW p.186

Not unexpectedly, there are references to the inner door in the gnostic literature. The writer of the *Second Apocalypse of James* seems to be explicit:

Once when I was sitting meditating, he (Jesus) opened the door.

Second Apocalypse of James 50; cf. NHS11 pp.120–21

The reference here is to the inner door, which is opened by means of meditation. The same meaning is also intended by the writer of the *Teachings of Silvanus*, who also writes explicitly of meditation on the divine Word (*Logos*):

Knock upon yourself as upon a door, and walk upon yourself as on a straight road. For if you walk on the road, it is impossible for you to go astray. And if you knock with Wisdom (*Sophia*), you knock on hidden treasures. . . . Do not tire of knocking on the door of the Word (*Logos*), and do not cease walking in the way of Christ. . . . Open the door for yourself that you may know the One who is. Knock upon yourself that the Word (*Logos*) may open for you.

Teachings of Silvanus 106–7, 103, 117; cf. TS pp.56–59, 50–51, 78–79

In the Mandaean texts, the nature of this door is again explicitly stated. It is the means by which the soul can escape from the body:

The soul, . . . when she desires to depart from the body, opens a door for herself to escape from the body and goes forth like a dove.

Thousand and Twelve Questions I:281; cf. TTQ p.189

In another Mandaean text, the writer praises the master:

Lo, you came and opened a door,
 you levelled a road and trod out a path,
 set up a boundary stone
 and knitted together a community.
 You were helper, saviour and guide
 to the Father of the great family of Life,
 and knitted it together in a communion of Life,
 built it into a great building of sound construction,
 and brought it forth to the great place of light
 and the everlasting abode.

Mandaean Prayer Book 76; cf. CPM p.79

The master comes and opens a door for his disciples. He lays out a path for them to follow. Though his relationship with each one is individual, he makes a close-knit community out of them and takes them to the place of light. This “community” is a fold for the sheep, the disciples, not physically but spiritually; it is the spiritual protection that a master affords to all his disciples. Echoing the words of Jesus and also referring to the inner door as “your gates”, a Manichaean psalmist writes:

We are your people, the sheep of your fold:
 let us come in to your gates and appear before you.
 They that sought found;
 they prayed, it was given them;
 They knocked at the door:
 the door was opened to them.

Come inside, my brethren, by the narrow door,
 and let us comfort one another with the Word of Truth.
 For the world has gone astray,
 men looking for the door:
 The door was shut against them,
 the door was not opened to them.
 Looking for God, they found not what God is;
 their god is their belly, their glory is their shame.

Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.156

The writer points out that consciously or unconsciously, everyone is looking for this door, but very few find it. Most people make a god out of their “belly” – their bodily needs – and altogether miss the God within. The door is therefore “shut against them”.

See also: **eye centre, eye of a needle, knocking (8.5), single eye.**

1. *E.g. Acts of John* 95, 98, 109, *ANT* pp.255, 109, 268; *Acts of Peter* XX, *ANT* p.322.
2. *E.g. Teachings of Silvanus* 103, 106, 117, *TS* pp.50–51, 56–57, 78–79.
3. *E.g. Manichaean Psalm Book* CCL, CCXIX, *MPB* pp.2, 59.

dvārbīn (H) *Lit.* a telescope; metaphorically, the eye centre. The nature of a telescope is to bring something distant into close-up focus. Similarly, concentration at the eye centre brings the Divine into focus. Again, a telescope is most effective when used from a high vantage point. Here, the similarity is that the eye centre is located at the top of the body.

The metaphor is used by the Indian mystic Tulsī Sāhib (c.1763–1843) of Hathras in Uttar Pradesh for the eye centre, the headquarters of the mind and soul in the human body:

Concentrate through the telescope (*dvārbīn*):
focus your soul in the tower (of the body).

Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 1, Rekhtā 7, TSH1 p.60

Tulsī Sāhib’s disciple Swami Shiv Dayal Singh also uses the expression in a more general way. In this context, *alakh* (imperceptible) and *agam* (inaccessible) are aspects of the Godhead:

The Lord has given me such a telescope (*dvārbīn*)
that I have gone beyond *Alakh* and *Agam*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:14.20–21, SBP p.62

See also: **do-dala-kamala.**

dvār(a) (S/Pa/H), **dwār** (H), **dār** (H/Pu), **dar**, **duār** (Pu) *Lit.* door, gate; doorway, gateway, passage, entrance, opening, access, way; used metaphorically in a variety of mystical contexts, as in *svarga-dvāra* (gateway to heaven), *naraka-dvāra* (gateway to hell), *amṛita-dvāra* (door to immortality), *mukti dvār* (door of liberation), *dār ghar* (door of the house), and so on. Like many Hindi words, there are several variants in the various local vernaculars.

In Buddhism, the metaphor is used in several particular ways, such as *vimokkha-dvāra* (Pa. door of salvation) and *amata-dvāra* (Pa. door to immortality, door to the deathless). These generally refer to the noble eightfold path of Buddhism, the path to *nirvāṇa*.

Then there are the *pañca-dvārāvajjana* (Pa. giving attention to the five doors of sense perception), *mano-dvārāvajjana* (Pa. giving attention to the doors of the mind), and *indriyesu guttadvāratā* (Pa. guarding the doors of the senses, restraining the senses). These refer to guardianship of the mind and senses.

There are also the *dvātriṃsha-dvāra-lakṣhaṇa* (thirty-two marks) or bodily characteristics by which it is said that a ‘great man (*mahāpuruṣa*),’ which includes a *buddha*, may be recognized. Among these characteristics, which probably originated in pre-Buddhist times, are the impression of a wheel on the soles of the feet, arms reaching to the knees, and long toes and fingers.¹

A number of Indian *sants* (saints) have used the term *dwār* in reference to the third eye, often in conjunction with some other term, such as *ghar duārā* and *dār ghar*, both meaning ‘door of the house’. The third eye or eye centre is known as a door because it is the ‘opening’ that leads out of the body into the astral and higher realms. It is the point at which the soul and mind can concentrate and leave the physical body. To pass through it requires dedicated, one-pointed meditation – knocking. Meditation is described as knocking at a door because it requires constant repetition of the same mental action (*sumiran, japa*). Additionally, when a person knocks at a door, he expects there to be someone on the inside who will open it. An invitation to enter is required from the owner of the house. For a disciple, the one who opens the door and draws him inside is his *guru*.

The door that leads inwards is commonly contrasted with the nine doors (*nava-dvāra*)² of the body (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth and the two lower openings) which lead out through the senses into the physical universe. In this sense, the third eye is referred to as the tenth door (*daswān dwār*). However, *daswān dwār* is also used for the first region of pure spirit that lies immediately above the universal mind. The door leading out of the body is a reflection of this higher door.

The *Kaṭha Upanishad* speaks of eleven doors (*ekādasha-dvāra*),³ the two further doors being the *brahmarandhra* in the crown of the head, and the ‘opening’ at the level of the navel – another ‘door’ through which the soul and mind can leave the body.

There are many examples of this term in the poetry of the saints. It is the door to the treasure of the divine presence:

Turks to their mosques,
Hindus to their temples –
With blind fervour do they run;

The invisible One dwells within the body,
but they do not try to find the door (*duār*).
Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Mūrt pūjā kā ang 15, KSS p.165

By breaking the lock, I have opened the door (*duār*),
and found the inaccessible treasure.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 37:22.6, SBP p.328

It is the door leading to liberation of the soul, and can be found through
initiation into the divine Word by a suitable *guru*:

Through the Word (*Sabad*) of the *guru*,
seeking at the Lord's door (*dar*),
one finds the treasure of liberation.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1009, AGK

He blew the breath of life into the musical instrument of the body,
and revealed the nine doors (*nao duāre*),
but He kept the tenth (*daswā*) hidden.
Through the *gurdwāra* (*guru's* gate),
some are blessed with loving faith,
and the tenth door (*daswā duār*) is revealed to them.
Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 922, AGK

It is the door that spiritual seekers yearn to find:

Where is that gate (*dar*) and where is that dwelling (*ghar*),
in which You sit and take care of all?
The *Nād* vibrates there,
and countless musicians play on all sorts of instruments.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 6, AGK

Where is that door (*dar*) where You live, O Lord?
What is that door (*dar*) called?
Among all doors (*darā*), who can find that door (*dar*)?
For the sake of that door (*dar*),
I wander around sadly, detached from the world;
If only someone would come and tell me about that door (*dar*).
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 877, AGK

But to pass through this narrow gateway requires complete elimination of
the ego:

O Nānak, the gate of liberation (*mukat duārā*) is very narrow:
 only the very tiny can pass through.
 Through egotism, the mind has become bloated:
 how can it pass through?

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 509, AGK

See also: **daswān dwār** (4.1, 8.2), **ghar**.

1. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 30, *Lakkhaṇa Sutta*, *PTSD3* pp.142, 150.
2. See *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 3:18; *Bhagavad Gītā* 5:13.
3. *Kaṭha Upanishad* 2:2.1.

ears of my buddha-nature, eyes of my buddha-nature (C. *fóxìng ěr*, *fóxìng yǎn*) The inner ears and eyes of the soul; the *buddha*-nature being a Buddhist term that in a Manichaean context refers to the immortal and eternal aspect of a human being; hence, a verse from the Manichaean hymns from Chinese Turkestan – in this instance in praise of the great saint (*dàshèng*) or master – that links the inner experience of mystic light and sound:

Through him, the eyes of my *buddha*-nature (*fóxìng yǎn*)
 have now been opened and can therefore see
 the wonderful *dharma*-body (*dharmakāya*) everywhere.
 Through him, the ears of my *buddha*-nature (C. *fóxìng ěr*)
 have also been enlightened,
 and can hear the clear and pure Sound continuously.

Mónfjiào xiàbù zàn, T54 2140:1270c7–8; cf. *LSMH* (10) p.176

The *dharmakāya* is a Buddhist term that refers to the real, spiritual or universal form of a *buddha* or saviour, inner contact with which was a central aspect of Mānī's teachings.

See also: **ears of the soul, inner hearing**.

ears of the soul, ears of the mind The spiritual faculty through which the mind and soul can hear in the inner realms of consciousness; the faculty that hears the divine music of the Word – the Voice of God; also known as the hearing of the soul. Mystic literature contains many references to this faculty. Hence, the gnostic writer of the *Testimony of Truth* talks specifically “to those who know to hear, not with the ears of the body but with the ears of the mind”.¹

It is the spiritual ears that Isaiah is referring to in his well-known prophecy of the messiah:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 35:5, KJV

As a result of a literal understanding of these words, a great many physical miracles were attributed to Jesus in an attempt to prove that he had been the messiah. The gnostics and mystically minded of the time, however, always understood the meaning to be spiritual, as in a Manichaean psalm:

He revived the dead from the death of their sins.
He opened the eyes that were closed,
of him who had been blind from his time of birth.
He caused the ears of the unhearing soul to hear.

Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.194

The meaning is again specific in a Manichaean plea to the saviour, found in a hymn from Chinese Turkestan. Here, it would seem that the Buddhist *Dharma* is being identified with the immanent creative power, which can be heard as inner sound or music, while the *dharma*-nature is the real and spiritual essence of a person's being:

Open the light-ears (C. *guāng míng ěr*) of my *dharma*-nature (C. *fǎxìng*)
so that they may hear without hindrance
the Sound (C. *yīn*) of the wonderful *Dharma* (*fǎ*);
I am thereby spared myriad kinds of fallacious songs.

Mónfǎjiào xiàbù zàn, T54 2140:1271c13–14; cf. LSMH (57) p.181

By hearing the mystic Sound, the soul is protected from the babble of illusion and untruth that characterizes this world.

See also: **inner hearing**.

1. *Testimony of Truth* 29; cf. *NHS15* pp.122–23.

‘**ein**, ‘**ayn** (He) *Lit.* eye (‘*ein*, ‘*ayn*); also, spring, fountain (‘*ein*); used symbolically, in biblical and later Jewish religious texts, for the mind's intuition and spiritual understanding; mystically, spiritual vision, the inner eye, the eye of the soul, the eye of the mind; ‘*ayn* is sometimes transliterated as ‘*ayin*.

The biblical psalmist prays:

Look and answer me, O Lord my God:
lighten my eyes (‘*ein*), lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him,"
 and those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;
 my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

Psalms 13:4–6; cf. JCL

"Lighten my eyes" is the psalmist's request that the inner eye be opened, lest he 'die' spiritually. In this way, through the Lord's mercy, he will attain salvation and be freed from his enemies – spiritually he will overcome his weaknesses.

In the *Zohar*, the primary work of the Kabbalah, the "light of the eye" refers to the light of the far-seeing spiritual eye. Symbolically, it is said that this eye can see long distances, which means that it can penetrate deep into the heart of creation and comprehend how things are put together. It is equated with the light by which God created the universe. The *Zohar* says that God revealed this light or this vision to Adam, Moses and David, who were worthy of His grace; but He withheld it from those who were unworthy, such as the wicked generations that followed:

"And God said: 'Let there be light. And there was light.'"¹ This is the light that the Holy One, blessed be He, created at the very beginning, and it is the light of the eye (*'ein*). It is this light that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed to Adam, who with its aid could see from one end of the world to the other. It is this light that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed to David, who uttered praises and said, "How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You."² It is this light that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed to Moses, who with its aid could see from Gilead to Dan.³ And when the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that three wicked generations would arise, . . . He concealed it, to prevent them from using it.

Zohar 1:31b, WZ2 p.585

See also: **'ein ha-lev**, **'ein ha-nefesh**, **'ein ha-sekhel**, **'ein ha-sokheh**, **eyes of the soul**.

1. *Genesis* 1:3.
2. *Psalms* 31:19.
3. *Deuteronomy* 34:1.

'ein ha-lev (He) *Lit.* eye (*'ein*) of the heart (*ha-lev*); the eye of the soul; spiritual, contemplative, mystical, or inner vision; used synonymously with *'ein ha-sekhel* (eye of consciousness); also, the imaginative faculty of the mind;

a term found especially in Hebrew texts from the golden age of Spanish Andalusian literature (C10th–12th), which is believed by many to have been greatly influenced by the Sufi and Arabic literature of the time.

In the Muslim, Judaic and Neoplatonic milieu of the period, the *‘ein ha-lev* was understood to be the spiritual eye or faculty of vision by which God, angels and other spiritual realities are perceived. As the twelfth-century, Arabic-speaking, Jewish mystic and philosopher Moses Maimonides observes:

It (the heart) appreciates that there are bodies whose matter is a combination of the four fundamental (material) elements; and bodies whose matter is simple and contains only one type of matter (*i.e.* entirely material objects); and forms that are immaterial and cannot be seen by the eye (*i.e.* subtle forms and heavenly beings), rather they are discernible only to the eye of the heart (*‘ein ha-lev*) – just as we know of the existence of the Lord of everything, though we do not see Him with our eyes.

Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Yesodei ha-Torah 4:7, MTMM;

cf. MTMC, in TSSW p.171

See also: *‘ein ha-nefesh*, *‘ein ha-sekheh*, *‘ein ha-sokheh*, *eyes of the soul*.

‘ein ha-nefesh (He) *Lit.* eye (*‘ein*) of the soul (*ha-nefesh*); spiritual, contemplative, mystical, or inner vision.

According to the *Talmud*, Moses attained the most elevated spiritual state, seeing God through a “speculum (*aspaklaria*, mirror) that shines”.¹ The medieval Spanish kabbalist Moses ben Naḥman (Naḥmanides) interprets this to mean that Moses was able to see God directly, through “contemplation of consciousness (*histaklut ha-sekheh*)” and “elevation of understanding (*‘illuy ha-havanah*)”.² He adds that this was possible because “he was clothed in the holy spirit” such that everything he saw was through the “eye of the soul (*‘ein ha-nefesh*)”. This, he says, constitutes “true vision”, which is also the vision of the “pious (*hasidim*)” who see angels:

For the people of that world will attain the level of Moses, our rabbi, whose soul rose above his body until his physical faculties were annihilated, and he was clothed in the holy spirit every moment, as if his sight and hearing were only through the eye of the soul (*‘ein ha-nefesh*). . . . The body is annihilated and the soul separates from its faculties when the holy spirit (*ruah ha-kodesh*) emanates upon a person; and he sees by means of vision (*hezyon*) itself when he sees Michael and Gabriel; and this is true vision (*hezyon*) and the proper

hearing. . . . Thus we have come to deal with the mysteries of prophecy (*sodot ha-nevu'ah*) and visions of the pious (*re'iyot ha-ḥasidim*) who see angels.

Moses ben Naḥman, Kitvei Ramban, KRN2 p.299, in TSSW pp.305–6

See also: **‘ein ha-lev**, **‘ein ha-sekhel**, **‘ein ha-sokheh**, **eyes of the soul**.

1. *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Baba Yevamot 49b*, in TSSW p.305.

2. *Moses ben Naḥman, Kitvei Ramban, KRN2 p.297, in TSSW p.305.*

‘ein ha-sekhel (He) *Lit.* eye (*‘ein*) of the consciousness (*ha-sekhel*); spiritual vision, contemplative seeing; used in Jewish Neoplatonism for the faculty that provides direct vision of spiritual, non-corporeal ‘forms’. *Sekhel*, often translated in scholarly texts as ‘intellect’, means consciousness, and *‘ein ha-sekhel* refers to spiritual vision while in full consciousness.

Eleazar Azikri (1533–1600) of Safed in northern Israel writes:

You should constantly see your Creator with the eye of your consciousness (*‘ein ha-sekhel*), for “the Lord looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding (*maskil*), a man mindful of God.”¹ That is, with the eyes of his consciousness (*‘ein ha-sekhel*) he seeks Him, and when he sees Him, it makes an impression, as in the case of the ostrich, for, when she looks well at her egg, the (baby) ostrich is formed and takes shape within it, and breaks open and (the ostrich) comes out.

So, too, with respect to God, when He looks at you He causes all kinds of bountifulness and blessings to flow upon you. . . . For just as a man comes to be seen (*lera’ot*), so he comes to see (*lir’ot*). . . . For the enlightened ones (*maskilim*, those of higher consciousness) (this occurs) on a regular basis, every day, at any time, in every place. When you look heavenward with the intention of the heart, the arousal of the will, of every will, will be stirred – blessed be He and blessed be His name for ever and ever.

Eleazar Azikri, Milei di-Shemaya, MSEA p.103; cf. in TSSW pp.318–19

Azikri understands the “eye of your consciousness (*‘ein ha-sekhel*)” to be the spiritual vision by which the practitioner can contemplate the Divine within himself. In this context, he interprets a verse from *Psalms*, “I have placed the Lord before me constantly,”² as “the need to contemplate God without interruption through the eye of consciousness (*‘ein ha-sekhel*), for by so doing one draws down the flow of light from above”.³

See also: ‘ein ha-lev, ‘ein ha-nefesh, ‘ein ha-sokheh, eyes of the soul.

1. *Psalms* 14:2.
2. *Psalms* 16:8.
3. Elliot Wolfson on Eleazar Azikri, *Mele di-Shemaya*, *MSEA* p.120; cf. in *TSSW* p.319.

‘ein ha-sokheh (He) *Lit.* the seeing (*ha-sokheh*) eye (*‘ein*); the eye of the soul; spiritual, contemplative, mystical, or inner vision; a term used in the medieval period for the mystical vision of the *Merkavah* (‘chariot’) mystics (*fl.* C1st BCE – C6th CE), a school of early Jewish mysticism that based its understanding of mystical experiences on descriptions such as the ascent of the biblical prophet Elijah and the visions of Ezekiel.¹

Rabbi Nathan of Rome, who recorded the teachings of Ḥai Gaon (939–1038), in his *Aruch Completum* (*Sefer ha-Arukh ha-Shalem*), explains his predecessor’s teachings concerning the *Merkavah* practices. Firstly, the practitioner had to be living a pure life, relinquishing all forms of negative behaviour, and following the biblical and talmudic commandments. Then, after fasting for a number of days, he would practise meditation. Adopting a kind of foetal position, lying down and holding his head between his knees, he would repeat to himself the praises of God. The intention was to enter within himself and to gaze into the innermost recesses of his heart, in order to experience visions of the seven palaces or sanctuaries leading to the throne of the divine King. Rabbi Nathan explains that through the practice of “gazing at the palaces”, the practitioners would have a contemplative vision of the *merkavah* in the “chamber of their heart” through the spiritual vision of their “seeing eye”:

This is explained in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (‘Greater *Hekhalot*’) and *Hekhalot Zutarti* (‘Lesser *Hekhalot*’). They (the mystics) would perform certain actions, pray certain prayers in purity, make (theurgic) use of the crown (of God), gaze upon the palaces, see the divisions of angels according to their position, and (see) palace after palace. . . . They did not ascend on high, but rather in the chamber of their heart they saw and contemplated (*ro’in ve-zofin be-ḥadrei libban*) like a person who sees and contemplates something clearly with his eyes, and they heard and spoke with a seeing eye (*‘ein ha-sokheh*) by means of the holy spirit.

Nathan ben Yehiel, Aruch Completum 1:14, *ATTM*, in *TSSW* p.146

In other words, according to Ḥai Gaon, the focused attention or consciousness of these early mystics became their “seeing eye” – also called the ‘eye of the

heart'. Concentrating spiritually within themselves and reaching a higher state of consciousness, they experienced the mystic vision. Ḥai described this internal vision as the 'seeing of the heart (*re'iyat ha-lev*)', a term that appears later in the poetry of Judah Halevi (c.1075–1141).

Ḥai also regarded the miracles and contemplative, mystical visions of these pure practitioners to be identical to those of the prophets.² Like other Jewish mystics of the period, it is likely that the interpretations of Ḥai and other rabbis were influenced by Sufi teachings, especially concerning the *maqāmāt* (stations) and *manāzil* (stages) of spiritual ascent, and the legend of the Prophet Muḥammad's ascent (*mi'rāj*) through the seven heavens.³

See also: 'ein ha-lev, 'ein ha-nefesh, 'ein ha-sekhelel, eyes of the soul, merkavah (8.5), mi'rāj (8.4).

1. 2 Kings 2:8–12; Ezekiel 1:3–28.

2. Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, TSSW pp.146–47.

3. Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, TSSW p.170.

entering in, entering the kingdom Mystically, the process of going within oneself by means of spiritual practice or mystic prayer; entering the astral and higher heavenly regions of the mind and soul. The expression is used in *Matthew*, where Jesus says:¹

Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:
For neither do you yourselves go in,
nor do you permit those that would enter to go in.

Matthew 23:13; cf. JB, KJV, RSV

He means that priests and religious people, in this case the “scribes and Pharisees”, present themselves as the authorities on spiritual matters and the explanation of the scriptures, though in fact they may not truly understand them at all. Only rarely are they aware of the means by which a person can “go in”. People, however, go to them for spiritual guidance and – however lofty their moral or ethical guidance may be – no practice is prescribed whereby a person may enter within themselves. The key to such knowledge or *gnōsis* is in the hands of one who knows how to go within, and is able to teach that path or method to others.

It may be asked what is meant by ‘within’ and ‘inner experience’. When the eyes are closed and the attention is focused inside, it can be said that a person is within himself. Although an individual will normally see nothing but darkness within when the eyes are shut, that darkness is actually the

starting point of the spiritual journey back to God. It is all a question of the mind's attention. When the mind is scattered into thoughts concerning the outside world, it cannot really be said that such a person is within himself, even if his eyes are shut. But when the attention becomes concentrated upon and interested in what lies within that darkness, then the inner journey can begin. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "The kingdom of God is within you."² And, more expansively:

If those who lead you say to you,
 "See, the kingdom is in the sky,"
 then the birds of the sky will precede you.
 If they say to you, "It is in the sea,"
 then the fish will precede you.
 Rather, the kingdom is inside of you,
 and it is outside of you.

Gospel of Thomas 32:3, NHS20 pp.52–53

He is saying that God is not only within, but He is present within everything, everywhere. He is both within and without, but to find Him, the journey must start by seeking within one's own consciousness. Jesus also advises, in general terms, how to enter this kingdom:

Jesus saw infants being nursed.
 He said to his disciples,
 "These infants being nursed
 resemble those who enter the kingdom."
 They said to him,
 "Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?"

Jesus said to them,
 "When you make the two one,
 and make the inside like the outside
 and the outside like the inside,
 and the above like the below,
 and when you make the male and the female one and the same,
 so that the male shall not be male nor the female female;
 And when you fashion eyes in place of an eye,
 and a hand in place of a hand,
 and a foot in place of a foot,
 and a likeness in place of a likeness –
 Then will you enter the kingdom."

Gospel of Thomas 37:22; cf. GS p.384, NHS20 pp.62–63

The meaning is clearly cryptic. A person has to become as humble, innocent and pure as a little child. He has to rise above duality. “The two” – the individual soul and God – have to become one. God, who lies on the “inside” will then be seen on the “outside”. He who is “above” will be seen “below”. A human being also needs to rise above the attractions of carnal desire.

The soul also needs to awaken her innate inner faculties. The eye of the soul is to replace the physical eyes; inner means of spiritual transport and activity are to replace the physical feet and hands. And the “likeness” or image of God, the real self or identity of the soul, must replace the “likeness” of the human mind, the false or counterfeit self.

There are a number of other sayings where Jesus indicates the prerequisites for entering the kingdom of heaven that lies within: “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” and, “Unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”³ To enter within, he tells his disciples, you have to become better and purer than the priests and scholars; you have to become simple and innocent, like children. He also tells them that to enter the kingdom, they have to follow the Ten Commandments, adding the famous observation that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” At this, the disciples exclaim, “Who then can be saved?”, to which Jesus gives the ageless reply, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”⁴

In *John*, Jesus himself, speaking as the incarnation of the *Logos*, says that a man may “enter in” through contact with the divine Word. Then he will find spiritual nourishment (“pasture”) in the spiritual realms:

I am the Door:

By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved,
and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

John 10:9, KJV

Christian mystics have understood what it means to seek God within themselves. Johann Tauler counsels seeking one’s inward spiritual essence:

Children, seek not after great knowledge. Simply enter into your own inward essence, and learn to know what you yourselves are, spiritually and naturally.

Johann Tauler, Sermons 16; cf. HLT p.324

God, he says, is like a fathomless abyss of being and life in which the soul must entirely lose itself – a favourite figure of speech among the fourteenth-century Rhineland mystics, also known as the Friends of God:

Everything depends on this: a fathomless sinking into a fathomless nothingness. . . . The heavenly Father says, "You shall call me Father, and shall never cease to enter in; entering ever further, ever nearer, so as to sink ever deeper into an unknown and unnamed Abyss; and above all ways, images and forms, above all powers, to lose yourself, deny yourself, and even unform yourself." In this lost state, nothing is seen but a ground that rests upon itself: everywhere one Being, one Life.

Johann Tauler, Sermon on St Matthew; cf. in SSJR pp.257–58

The Friend of God who wrote the *Book of the Poor in Spirit* writes that to attain this goal, the soul must turn within, away from the senses and external forms; the individual spirit has no other work to do but to seek and love the Holy Spirit:

To fulfil this aim, man should turn himself away from external exercises, and exercise himself within. Exterior actions pass over to creatures, the interior to God. He who truly desires to find God should enter into himself and seek God within. . . .

Since God is within and in the spirit, detached from creatures, simple and pure, the clearest light, which is Himself, full of ardent love, we too must be this way if we would find Him. We must enter into our heart, turn away from all external actions. We must have a pure mind, empty of all images and forms, clear, simple, enlightened by the divine light, inflamed with the fire of the love of the Holy Spirit.

Book of the Poor in Spirit 4:6.1, BPSG pp.252–53

Brother Lawrence, who himself enjoyed a life of communion with the Divine, urges the soul onwards, for who knows, he says, when death will come? –

Let us enter into ourselves and break down the barrier that hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left; death follows us close. . . . I say again, let us enter into ourselves. The time presses: there is no room for delay; our souls are at stake.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 4; cf. PPGL pp.37–38

It is easily said, but help is required to enter this kingdom. In Christianity, contemplatives have traditionally sought the guidance of a spiritual director. Better still is the help of a living saviour. In the Manichaean hymns, where the soul has previously been begging for release from this world, the saviour promises:

I am come forth to save you from the Sinner (the devil),
to make you whole and free from pain,
and to bring gladness to your heart.

And all you have desired of me I shall bestow upon you,
and I shall make new your place within the lofty kingdom.

And I shall open before you the gates in all the heavens,
and I shall make smooth your path, free from terror and vexation.
And I shall take you to your true home, the blessed abode.
And forever shall I show to you the noble Father;
and I shall lead you in, into His presence, in pure raiment.

Manichaean Hymns, Angad Rōshnān VI:64–68; cf. MHCP pp.150–53

Jesus also uses similar words to console his disciples:

Fear not, little flock;
For it is your Father's good pleasure
to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32, KJV

See also: **kingdom** (2.1), **mystical experience** (8.1).

1. *Cf. Luke 11:52; Gospel of Thomas 40:39.*
2. *Luke 17:21, KJV.*
3. *Matthew 5:20, 18:3; cf. KJV.*
4. *Matthew 19:16–26, KJV.*

eye(s) of the soul, eye(s) of the spirit, eye(s) of the heart, eye(s) of light, eye(s) of the mind, spiritual eyes The innate faculty of the soul and higher mind that is able to perceive the inner light and other inner phenomena, especially when the attention is focused within in contemplation, and enters the higher realms of consciousness; also called inner or spiritual vision. Such terms have also been used to refer metaphorically to the ability of the mind or soul to comprehend or appreciate something. Thus, to see life from a spiritual perspective would be to view things with the eyes of the soul; or to see the creation with the eyes of the soul would mean to see the beauty of God reflected in all things. It is sometimes difficult, from the context, to determine whether a writer is using such terms as a figure of speech, or in specific reference to the faculty of inner mystic vision.

The earliest known occurrence of these terms is perhaps in the works of Plato. In the *Republic*, Plato expounds his understanding of the world of 'ideas', 'forms' or 'archetypes' (*eidē*) that comprise the absolute forms of what appear in this world as mere shadows or reflections. He is speaking of a subtle world of spiritual or higher mental forms, of which this world is a reflection. And these higher forms, he says, "can only be seen with the (eye of) the mind (*dianoia*)".¹ Later, speaking of dialectic (elevating dialogue)

as a means of helping the soul arise from the mud of material existence, he observes, “It is literally true that when the eye of the soul (*psychēs omma*) is sunk in barbaric mud, she (dialectic) gently draws it forth, and leads it up.”² Again, speaking of the ideal progression in the life of citizens of his idealized republic, he says that they come at last, having led a life of service, to its “consummation” – to see the “universal Light” or “absolute Good” with the “eye of the soul (*psychēs augē*, ‘light beam of the soul’)”:

When they have reached fifty years of age, then let those who still survive and have distinguished themselves in every action of their lives and in every branch of knowledge come at last to their consummation. The time has now arrived at which they must raise the eye of the soul (*psychēs augē*) to the universal Light that lightens all things, and behold the absolute Good.

Plato, Republic 7:540a, DP2 p.406

Further, Plato maintains that the study of mathematics, geometry and astronomy will also lead to the purification and awakening of the inner eye. He explains that geometry only appears to be about triangles and squares; the true or better purpose of such study (*mathēma*) is pure knowledge; and he defines pure knowledge as knowledge of the eternally existing, never arising and never perishing Reality.³ He then adds:

I quite admit the difficulty of believing that in every soul there is an organ (*organōn*) which, when lost and blinded by ordinary pursuits, is, by studies (*mathēma*) such as these, purified and re-illuminated; and which is far more precious than ten thousand bodily eyes (*ommatōn*); for by it alone is Reality beheld.

Plato, Republic 7:527d–e; cf. DP2 p.392

‘Studies’, here, is a rather inadequate translation of *mathēma*, which also implies inner knowledge, acquired through contemplative practices. Plato is saying that a concentrated and contemplative reflection or meditation on the beauty and order in the universe leads to an awareness of the divine Principle that flows through all things; and this, in turn, leads to an inner awakening.

The first-century Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus, who was well-versed in Greek philosophy, also speaks of the eyes of the soul, using the term freely in a mystical context. If the vision of the physical eyes is so far reaching, then how much more must be that of the “eyes of the soul (*psychēs ommata*)”? –

Since the eyes formed of perishable matter have raised themselves to such a height as to travel from the earthly region up to heaven that is so far away and to touch its bounds, how vast in all directions must we suppose to be the range of the eyes of the soul (*psychēs ommata*)?

The deep yearning to perceive the Existent One gives them wings to reach not only to the furthest region of the upper air, but even to pass beyond the very bounds of the entire universe, and speed away toward the Uncreated.

Philo Judaeus, On Planting 5; cf. PCW3 pp.222–23, WPJ1 p.420

Writing of the struggle and attainment of such “perfection” by the “man of practice, who receives for his special reward the vision of God (*thea Theou*)”, he says:

In his former years, the eye of his soul (*psychēs omma*) had been closed; but by means of continuous striving he began, though slowly, to open it and to break up and throw off the mist that overshadowed him. For a beam purer than ether and incorporeal suddenly shone upon him and revealed the spiritual world (*noētos kosmos*).

Philo Judaeus, On Rewards and Punishments 6; cf. PCW8 pp.332–33

According to Philo, permitting his imagination free rein in interpreting a passage from *Exodus*,⁴ God says to Moses:

“I bid you come and contemplate the universe and its contents, a spectacle apprehended not by the eye of the body but by the unsleeping eyes of the mind (*dianoias ommata*). Only let there be the constant and profound longing for wisdom which fills its scholars and disciples with verities glorious in their exceeding loveliness.” When Moses heard this, he did not cease from his desire, but kept the yearning for the Invisible aflame in his heart.

Philo Judaeus, Special Laws I:8, PCW7 pp.126–27

Plato’s mystical philosophy is well known to have exerted a formative influence, not only on the language of later Christian mystics, but also on the fundamental *Logos* doctrine, lying at the heart of Christian theology. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, St Augustine and many others have all acknowledged their debt to Plato and the Platonists. In his *Confessions*, in a passage that has echoed through the centuries of Christian mysticism, St Augustine writes of an experience he had after first reading the Platonists. He is addressing God:

And being thence admonished (by these books) to return to myself, I entered even into my inward self, You being my guide; and able I was for You had become my Helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (*oculus animae*), such as it was, above the eye of my soul (*oculus animae*), above my mind, the light unchangeable. Not this common light, which all flesh may look upon, . . . but other, far

far other. It shone above my soul, not as oil floats above water or the sky is above the earth, but above my soul because It made me, and I below It because I was made by It. He that knows the Truth knows what that light is; and he that knows It knows eternity.

Augustine, Confessions 7:10; cf. CA pp.146–47, CSA pp.132–33

Clement of Alexandria also confesses that the divine Word is both the “sun of the soul” and the “eye of the soul (*kataugazetai to ommā*, ‘eye that shines out’):

The sun could never show me the true God – but that healthful Word (*Logos*), which is the sun of the soul, which alone, when it arises in the depths of the soul, is the eye of the soul (*kataugazetai to ommā*), itself irradiated.

Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Heathen 6; cf. WCA1 p.70

Christian mystics in later times have had the same experience of divine light within themselves, seen with the eye of the soul. John of the Cross writes poetically that the soul says to God: “Let me see You face to face with the eyes of my soul.”⁵ Following which, he comments:

God is supernatural light to the eyes of the soul, without which she is in darkness,

John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle 10:8, CWJC2 p.227

Again, mystics are all agreed that the awakening of the inner eye comes about through contemplation and prayer, the soul being drawn by the power of divine love:

If the eye of your heart be ravished in prayer by contemplating heavenly things, then the time is near when your soul, risen above earthly things, will be made perfect in the love of Christ.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 27; cf. FLML (1:27) p.116, FLRR p.129

Speaking of how the soul, through love and yearning, is “made glad, and lifted into the contemplative life”, he continues:

The soul that is in this excellent state rises up in ecstasy, and is taken out of herself; and heaven being opened to the eye of her mind, offers secret things for her to gaze upon. But first, truly, a man must exercise himself assiduously in prayer and meditation, scarcely heeding bodily needs. By ardent practice of these means, casting out all that is unreal, he should not slacken day and night to seek and know God’s love.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 32; cf. FLML (2:2) p.136, FLRR p.144

And with further practice of contemplation:

Sweet yearnings come into his soul, and wonderful meditations directed to God alone, which, being tasted and growing in his mind, have an unutterable effect upon the soul. And with great delight and spiritual sweetness, they lead him on to the contemplation of heavenly things, purging his mind of the desire for worldly solace. So that the lover of God wants nothing so much as to be alone, and to attend only to the wishes of his Maker.

And when he has become well exercised in prayer, and has become accustomed to great quietness in meditation, destroying all wickedness and uncleanness and diligently following the narrow way, he makes great progress in the virtue of eternal love. And his yearnings raise him up on high, so that the entrance is opened, and with the eyes of his mind he sees the mysteries of heaven.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 36; cf. FLML (2:6) p.154, FLRR pp.159–60

But, adds Richard of St Victor, before the soul and mind can concentrate and rise within, they must first be purified:

Cleanse your mirror and light your candle. Then, when your mirror is burnished and your candle alight, and you are aware that it is so, then something of God's light and brightness will begin to shine in your soul, and something like a sunbeam will appear before your spiritual eye. It will open the eye of your soul so that it beholds God and things divine, heaven and things heavenly, and all manner of spiritual things.

Richard of St Victor, Benjamin 10; cf. LPD p.120, SWT p.20

Walter Hilton similarly says:

When a soul is purified by the love of God, illumined by wisdom and protected by the might of God, then is the eye of the soul opened to behold spiritual things, such as virtues, and angels, and holy souls, and heavenly things.

Walter Hilton, Song of Angels; cf. CSK p.68

But ultimately, he says, it is the grace and love of God that leads the soul to Him:

We ourselves do nothing more than allow Him to act as He wills, for the most that we can do is to yield ourselves readily to the working of His grace. Yet even this readiness does not originate in us, but in Him, so that all good that we do is due to Him, although we do not realize this. Not only does He do this, but in His love He does even more. He opens the eyes of the soul in a wonderful way, shows it the vision of

God, and reveals to it the knowledge of Himself little by little as the soul is capable of bearing it. By this means He draws all the love of the soul towards Himself.

The soul then begins to know Him in a spiritual way, and to love Him ardently. It then perceives something of the divine nature, how God is All and does all things, and how all good deeds and holy thoughts proceed from Him alone.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:34, LPH p.205

And then:

When a soul has been called to abandon the love of the world, and has been corrected and tested, mortified and purified as I have described, our Lord Jesus in His goodness and mercy reforms it in feeling as he sees best. He opens the eyes of the soul to see and know him, bathing it in his own blessed light. He does not do this fully at once, but little by little as the soul becomes able to bear it. The soul does not know God as He is, for no creature in heaven or earth can do this, nor can it see Him as He is, for that vision is granted only in the bliss of heaven. But it recognizes Him as a changeless Being, as sovereign Power, sovereign Truth and sovereign Goodness, and as the source of blessing, life, and eternal bliss. The soul perceives these truths and many others, but not as a bare, abstract, savourless theory, as a learned man may know Him solely by the exercise of his reason. For its understanding is uplifted and illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit to see Him as He is, more clearly and fully than can be expressed, with wondering reverence, ardent love, spiritual delight, and heavenly joy.

Although such an experience of God is brief and incomplete, it is so exalted and stupendous that it transports the soul, and withdraws all its affections and thoughts from worldly things, so that were it possible it would wish to enjoy it forever.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:32, LPH pp.195–96

He also repeats that the spiritual eyes are opened by the working of the Holy Spirit and divine love, and little can be said to explain the real nature of such vision. He likens it to an awareness of the luminous inner darkness that the soul discovers in deep contemplation. Having spoken of the ways in which divine love detaches a person from the world of the senses, he continues:

These are the ways through which divine love works in a soul, opening its spiritual eyes to see God by the infusion of an especial grace, and rendering it pure, refined, and capable of contemplation. Even the greatest theologian on earth could not conceive of or define the real nature of this opening of the spiritual eyes. For it cannot be attained

by study, or by a person's own unaided efforts. It is made possible principally by the grace of the Holy Spirit; a person's own efforts are only secondary. . . . This opening of the spiritual eyes is that glowing darkness and rich nothingness of which I spoke earlier.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:40, LPH p.223

The twentieth-century mystic, Nancy Mayorga, a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, is describing the same rise of the soul through the body towards the eye centre when she writes:

O divine God, keep the current of Your bliss moving always in me, moving upward from the depths of my being, through the heart, filled and lighted by Thy presence, into the throat, crowded with love so that it cannot speak and hardly breathe, into the centre of the forehead where the inner eye becomes dazzled and fascinated and fainting away in that brilliant sea of bliss.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM p.79

Going back almost two millennia, the apocryphal literature of early Christianity, much of which comes into the category of historical fiction with an overriding spiritual theme, also contains many references to the inner, mystic eye of the soul. In the *Acts of John*, John thanks Jesus who, "opened the eyes of my mind".⁶ To open this inner eye and to hear with the inner ear, all attention must be withdrawn from the bodily senses and taken inside. When this is done, then, by degrees, all the inner mysteries are revealed. Hence, in the *Acts of Peter*, Peter says:

Separate your souls from everything that is of the senses, from everything that appears, and does not really exist. Blind these outer eyes of yours, close these outer ears of yours, put away your doings that are seen; and you will perceive that which concerns Christ, and the whole mystery of your salvation.

Acts of Peter XXXVII; cf. ANT p.334

Peter also says that when a person has firm faith in Christ, both the inner seeing and inner hearing will be opened:

Then perceive in your mind that which you see not with your eyes, and though your ears are closed, yet let them be open in your mind within you.

Acts of Peter XXI; cf. ANT p.322

Likewise, in the *Doctrine of Addai*, the apostle Addai says:

By his true faith (in the Son) a man is able to acquire
the eye of the true mind.

Doctrine of Addai the Apostle, DAA p.28

Such firm faith is not a matter of emotion or reason, but of understanding, and can only be acquired by controlling the mind in meditation. Otherwise, an uncontrolled mind that is attracted to the world and tries to understand things through reasoning alone will always remain sceptical and in doubt. Expanding upon this theme, Addai continues:

Let not the secret eye of your mind be closed to the Height above. . . . Be not judges concerning the words of the prophets. Remember and consider that they are said by the Spirit of God; and he who accuses the prophets, accuses and judges the Spirit of God. May this be far from you! Because the ways of the Lord are straight, and the righteous walk in them without stumbling; but the unbelievers stumble in them, because they have not the secret eye of the secret mind, which has no need of questions in which there is no profit, but loss.

Doctrine of Addai the Apostle; cf. DAA pp.40, 42

Those whose “secret eye of the secret mind” is open will never question what the masters, the “prophets” say, for they have come to realize just who a master is. But “infidels”, those who follow the ways of reason and the lower mind, have no real understanding. They pass judgment and ask questions that are not only useless, but may even be injurious to themselves by leading them away from the Divine. To this, the writer of the *Clementine Homilies* adds that the perfect master, the “faultless prophet”, in this case Jesus, sees and knows all things through this “boundless eye of his soul”:

For, being a faultless prophet (*prophētēs aptaistos*), and looking upon all things with the boundless eye of his soul (*psychēs ophthalmos*), he knows hidden things.

Clementine Homilies III:13, CH p.62

It is the inner eye that ‘sees’ God. Hence, in the early Christian revelational text, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, speaking of his inner ascent, Isaiah says:

The eyes of my spirit were open, and I saw the Great Glory.

Ascension of Isaiah IX, AOT p.805

In the mythological *Story of St James*, it is Jesus who opens the inner eyes of his disciples:

He enlightened the eyes of their hearts; and showed them all the righteous men who have gone to their rest, from Adam to John; and they were shining in glittering raiment. . . . When the disciples had seen this spiritual vision, their hearts were strengthened, and they were glad, and fell to the earth and worshipped, saying: "We thank you, our Lord and master, Jesus the Christ, for the beauty of what you do for us poor men."

Story of St James; cf. MAA p.30

It is the master who "enlightens the eyes of the heart", while the "glittering raiment" they acquire refers to the astral and higher garments of the soul, including the pure light of the soul itself. Naturally, after the opening of such vision, the disciples are full of gratitude to their master.

The inner vision of one who hears the mystic Sound is automatically awakened, for the light comes from the Sound. Demonstrating the close integration of these two faculties, after hearing a description of the "country of the blessed" given by its inhabitants, Matthew says, in the *Acts of Matthew*:

When I had heard this from them, I longed to dwell in their country;
and my eyes were dazzled from hearing the sweetness of their speech.

Acts of Matthew, MAA p.101

Even more pointedly, in a passage from the *Acts of John*, to which the translator has deemed it necessary to add an apologetic footnote saying that although the wording may seem odd, the lines do appear as such in both of his versions of the manuscript, the disciples say:

Let us bestow our labour,
and let light shine in the ear
which the Evil One has blinded;
And let the father of lying (the Evil One)
be crushed beneath the feet of us all.

Acts of John, AAA p.4

While the devotee who wrote the *Odes of Solomon* says:

As the sun is the joy of them that wait for daybreak,
so my joy is the Lord.
For He is my sun,
and His rays have roused me.
And His light has dispelled
all darkness from my face:
In Him I have gained eyes,
and have seen His holy day.

Ears have become mine,
and I have heard His Truth.
Odes of Solomon 15:1–4, OSD p.68

Among the gnostics, the writer of the *Apocryphon of James* speaks of the inner ascent as “sending our minds further upwards”, where angelic sights are seen and heard:

And when we had passed beyond that place, we sent our minds further upwards and saw with our (inner) eyes and heard with our (inner) ears hymns and angelic benedictions and angelic rejoicing. And heavenly majesties were singing praise, and we too rejoiced.
Apocryphon of James 15, NHS22 pp.50–51

The Manichaean psalmists also write of the same faculty, as in a psalm where the opening of the “eyes of my soul” results from the practice of “your holy Wisdom”, a term for the divine creative power:

I have constantly practised your holy Wisdom,
which has opened the eyes of my soul
to the light of your glory;
And made me see those things that are hidden,
and those that are visible:
The things of the abyss (this world)
and the things of the Height.
Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXVIII; cf. MPB p.86

Another of these psalms also speaks of gazing at the radiant and glorious, light form or “image” of the saviour with the “joyous eye of my soul”⁷ and with “my eyes of light”. This radiant or heavenly form is only seen with the inner eye:

I was gazing at my familiar with my eyes of light,
beholding my glorious father,
he who is always waiting for me,
opening before me the gate to the Height.
Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXVI; cf. MPB p.19, GVM p.25

Divine help in the opening of this inner eye is affirmed in all mystic writings, as in a Manichaean psalm addressed to Jesus:

You have opened the eyes of my heart,
you have closed the eyes (of my body).
Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXX; cf. MPB p.89

Likewise, in the Manichaean writings from Chinese Turkestan, which use Buddhist terminology, the disciple requests that his “eyes of light” be opened so that he can perceive his *dharma*-nature, the true or innermost essence of his being. In this context, the Buddhist *Dharma* is identified with the creative power, the immanent Reality that can be seen as inner light and heard as inner sound. The *dharmakāya* (*dharma*-body) is the real or highest spiritual form of a fully enlightened *buddha* or master:

Open the eyes of light (C. *guāng míng yǎn*)
 of my *dharma*-nature (C. *fǎxìng*),
 so that they may see the *dharmakāya* (C. *shēn*)
 everywhere and without hindrance.
Mónǐjiào xiàbù zàn, T54 2140:1271c11; cf. *LSMH* (56) pp.180–81

The same reality is also described in a Mandaean text that maintains: “The eyes of the heart shine secretly.”⁸ “Secretly” means that inner vision is hidden from outer eyes. No one else need ever know what the disciple has within himself. It is a secret gift of the master, granted when the disciple is sufficiently prepared through the practice of meditation.

Similarly, in an allegorical Mandaean poem in which the master is a merchant selling his goods in this world, those who buy them have their eyes “filled with light”:

Many a one who bought my goods,
 his eyes were filled with light.
 His eyes were filled with light,
 and he saw the Great One in the house of perfection.
Mandaean Prayer Book 90; cf. *CPM* p.94, in *MEM* p.91

In another Mandaean poem, the master, as the divine Word, describes himself as the “Vine of Life”, a “Tree of Glory, from whose Fragrance” or emanation everyone draws their life. Those who come into contact with this Tree of the Word, says the poet, hear its “Discourse” and are filled with the inner light:

A Vine am I, the Vine of Life,
 a Tree whereupon there is no lie.
 A Tree of Glory, from whose Fragrance everyone is living.
 Everyone who listens to its Discourse (Sound),
 his eyes fill with light.
Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. *GSBM* p.59, *MEM* p.149

All of these writers, and many more from all times and all peoples, bear witness to the reality of the inner creation and the soul’s ability to experience it through mystic sight and hearing while still living in the body. Yet, as Jesus said:

If I have told you earthly things and you believe not,
how can you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

John 3:12; cf. KJV

See also: **inner vision, revelations** (8.1), **transport** (8.1), **visions** (8.1).

1. Plato, *Republic* 6:510d–e, *DP2* p.374.
2. Plato, *Republic* 7:533d; cf. *DP2* p.398, *PAC2* p.120.
3. Plato, *Republic* 7:527a–b.
4. *Exodus* 33:13–23.
5. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle* 10:7; cf. *CWJC2* p.227.
6. *Acts of John* 113; cf. *ANT* p.269.
7. *Manichaean Psalm Book* CCLXXX; cf. *MPB* p.101.
8. *Alma Rishaia Zuta* 4:335, *PNC* p.79.

eye centre The centre, focus or headquarters of the mind and soul in the physical body, situated in the forehead, behind and slightly above the two eyes, though having no real physical location, but lying in a more subtle mental plane; the point at which the attention is to be concentrated in order to contact the divine Word and ascend to higher realms; the thinking centre; the centre from which the attention spreads out into the body and the world during the waking state; a term used especially in relationship to Indian mysticism, corresponding to the single eye or third eye of Western mystical thought and the *do-dal kamal* (two-petalled lotus), the *ājñā chakra* (command centre), the *til* (point), the *dwār* (door), the *divya-chakshus* (divine eye), etc. of Indian terminology.

The mind is in the habit of thinking about myriad things, often with little method or order, moving chaotically from one thought to another by association of ideas, or as a result of the needs, events, and experiences of life. As a result, the attention becomes scattered outwardly from the eye centre, and functions in the body and in the material world presented to it by the five senses. When focused in the eye centre, the mind becomes still, and the person has himself under control. He is what the world may call ‘self-possessed’. His consciousness is elevated, and he is aware of himself as a being that is something other than the physical body. When the attention is scattered in the body and in the world, the sense of independent being is so dissipated that the mind identifies with the body, and starts thinking that its reality is the body. As Maharaj Charan Singh says:

In our body, the seat of the soul and mind knotted together is at the eye centre. If we are able to still our mind at the eye centre, as taught by a perfect master, then we can see that light within ourself. Actually, there is nothing but light within us, provided we are able to come back to the eye centre. As is mentioned in the Bible, “The light of the body is

the eye: if therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness.”¹

The light which Christ is referring to here is at the eye centre. But our mind is at the level of the senses and is attached to the creation, therefore we do not experience that light, and remain in the darkness of illusion. Having taken association of the mind, the soul is being pulled from the eye centre to the senses; and as long as we are a slave of the senses, the veil of darkness between us and the Father cannot be eliminated.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Saint John, LSJ p.13

Since the mind is always thinking, the easiest method of refocusing the attention at the eye centre is by repetition of words or names that have association with what lies within. In Indian terminology, this is known as *sumiran* (H) or *simran* (Pu., remembrance, recollection, repetition).

See also: **ājñā chakra** (5.1), **single eye**, **sumiran** (8.5).

1. *Matthew* 6:22–23; cf. *KJV*.

eye of a needle A metaphor used by Jesus, usually interpreted at face value, but perhaps referring to the single eye¹ or the strait gate,² as the centre of the mind and soul located behind the eyes; found in a single saying in *Mark*, whence it has been copied into *Matthew* and *Luke*, which conveys how impossible it is for a person whose mind is distracted and scattered by attachment to wealth and possessions to focus at the eye centre, and to pass through into the realms beyond death. Jesus says:³

“And again I say unto you, it is easier
for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,
than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed,
saying, “Who then can be saved?”
But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them,
“With men this is impossible;
but with God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:24–26, *KJV*

Jesus’ disciples are naturally perturbed by the comment, since everyone is attached to the world to a greater or lesser extent. But Jesus comforts them by saying that although it is indeed impossible for a man to detach himself unaided from the world, it is possible with God’s help. The response of the

disciples also indicates that a “rich man” implies one who is attached to the world regardless of the number of their possessions, for they query, “Who then can be saved?” implying that everyone falls into the category of what Jesus means by a “rich man”.

Many people have speculated about the origins of this expression. Some have suggested that there was a narrow gateway in Jerusalem called the eye of a needle, through which a man could barely pass, let alone a camel. Some have suggested that *kamelos* is a misprint for *kamilos* (rope). Others have wondered whether in the Greek of those days, one of the words for a rope was a ‘camel (*kamelos*)’. Certainly, one of the traditional materials used to make ropes was camel hair and even in modern times, the Greek word for a particular kind of thick hairy rope is *trichia*, derived from *tricha* which means ‘hair’. So there is no reason why in those days the word for a thick camel-hair rope could not have been *kamelos* – a camel. But whatever the origin of the expression, the spiritual meaning remains the same.

As a symbolic image, an upright needle also represents the human form, with the one single eye at the top, in the forehead, leading to the inner realms. The metaphor is therefore apposite, and has been used by mystics of other cultures. Indian mystics, for example, have called it the *sū duār* (door of the needle).

See also: **door, gates, single eye, sū duār.**

1. *Matthew* 6:22–23.
2. *Matthew* 7:13–14; *Luke* 13:24.
3. See also *Mark* 10:25–27; *Luke* 18:25–27.

fath-i bāb-i sīnah (P) *Lit.* opening (*fath*) a gate (*bāb*) in the heart (*sīnah*); the awakening of the inner faculties of perception. Rūmī uses the metaphor when he says:

Everyone in whose heart the gate is opened (*fath-i bāb*)
will behold the (spiritual) sun from all sides.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1399; cf. MJR2 p.77

See also: **bāb, ḥawāss.**

fragrance Spiritually, the spiritual fragrance of the soul; spiritual fragrances perceived by the soul; also, a sweet and spiritual fragrance in the atmosphere of saints and truly holy souls, a part of the spiritual aura of peace and love that surrounds them, discernible to those whose subtle perception is open to it.

Such fragrances are perceived by a subtle spiritual sense:

The fragrance of the divine perfumes is not discerned by our nostrils, but by a spiritual faculty.

Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 1, PG44 cols.780c ff.; cf. GGG p.156

Their source, says Origen, is the divine Word:

Only that soul is perfect who has her sense of smell so pure and purged that it can catch the fragrance of the spikenard and myrrh and cypress that proceed from the Word of God, and can inhale the grace of the divine perfume.

Origen, On the Song of Songs 2:11; cf. OSS p.168

Only he who with his whole intention and with all his love holds the Word of God in his heart will be able to perceive the perfume of his (the Word's) fragrance and his sweetness.

Origen, On the Song of Songs 2:10; cf. OSS p.166

John of the Cross confirms that the fragrance perceived within can sometimes so fill the soul that it is discernible by others, if their spiritual senses are sufficiently developed:

These fragrances are at times so abundant that the soul thinks herself to be clothed with delights and bathed in inestimable glory. So much so that not only is she conscious of them within, but they also overflow from her without, to such an extent that all who are able to discern such things recognize it. The soul in this case seems to them to be like a delectable garden, full of the delights and riches of God.

But not only when these flowers are opened can this be observed in these holy souls; but they bear within them, habitually, something of greatness and dignity, which causes others to stop and respect them by reason of the supernatural effect produced in them through their close and familiar intercourse with God. Even as it is written of Moses, in the book of *Exodus*, that they could not look upon his countenance by reason of the honour and glory that remained upon it, because he had spoken with God face to face.

John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle 17:7; cf. CWJC2 p.271

The passage in *Exodus*, to which he refers, reads:

And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony . . . that he did not realize that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him (the Lord). And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face

shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

Exodus 34:29–31; cf. KJV

There are a few places where John of the Cross and Teresa of Ávila mention the fragrance associated with particular holy individuals. Writing of a certain saintly nun, Cardona, St Teresa says:

She then went to Toledo, where she stayed with our nuns. They have all assured me that there was such a fragrance about her, like that of relics, that it clung ever to her habit and her girdle, which, as they had taken them from her and given her fresh ones, she left behind. The fragrance was so sweet that it moved them to praise our Lord. And the nearer they came to her, the sweeter it was. . . . So it inspired them with great devotion.

Teresa of Ávila, Book of the Foundations 28, CWTA3 p.160

John of the Cross, describing the spiritual garden to which the Beloved (the Word) draws the soul, writes of the spiritual fragrance and “silent music” of the Word that then fill the soul:

Over and above this habitual satisfaction and peace, the flowers or virtues (spiritual experiences and characteristics) of this garden . . . open in the soul and diffuse their fragrance in it after such manner that the soul seems to be, and in fact is, filled with delights from God. . . .

In this life, they (these virtues) are in the soul as flowers in bud, tightly closed, as in a garden. It is a marvellous thing at times to see them all opening, by the work of the Holy Spirit, and diffusing marvellous scent and fragrance in great variety. . . .

Then it (the soul) will be assailed by the fragrance of the water lilies from the sounding rivers which we said were the greatness of God that fills the entire soul. And intertwined and enlaced with these is the delicate scent of the jasmine (which is the whisper of the amorous breezes), . . . and all the other virtues and gifts that come . . . from tranquil knowledge and silent music and sonorous solitude and the delectable supper of love. . . . Happy the soul that in this life merits at times to taste the fragrance of these divine flowers.

John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle 24:6; cf. CWJC2 p.302

St Augustine is thinking of this spiritual fragrance when he says, “I breathe that fragrance which no wind scatters.”¹ The ecstasy of knowing the inner presence of the Holy Spirit fills the soul with a longing

to go beyond the confines of this world, as Orthodox monk Nikētas Stēthatos observes:

When you come to participate in the Holy Spirit, and recognize his presence through a certain ineffable energy and fragrance within yourself – this fragrance even spreading over the surface of your body – you can no longer be content to remain within the bounds of the created world.

Nikētas Stēthatos, On Spiritual Knowledge 38, Philokalia, PCT4 p.149

See also: **Fragrance of Life** (3.1).

1. St Augustine, *Confessions* 10:6.8, *CAFS* p.215.

gate(s), gates of heaven, gates of life, gates of light, gates of paradise, gates of righteousness, gates of the spiritual bridechamber The ‘entrance’ to heaven; esoterically, the eye centre or single eye, which is the centre, focus or headquarters of the mind and soul in the physical body, situated (though not physically) in the forehead, and through which the soul leaves the body and enters the heavenly realms, either at death, or in life during spiritual practice; also, as the ‘strait gate’ – an expression originating in a saying of Jesus¹ – the narrow or difficult path to God, ‘strait’ being an archaic word for ‘narrow’.

Such terms are very commonly used by Christian writers, where the meaning is generally more figurative than specific. Jesus himself, or the love of God, or the living of a Christian way of life are regarded as the ‘gateway to heaven’. Here and there, passages exist that suggest a more mystical connotation, as in the early Christian Nestorian liturgies, where the gateway to heaven is called by a number of expressions. It is the “gates of righteousness”, the “gates of the spiritual bridechamber” and the “gates of heaven” that are opened by the “gift of the Spirit from heaven”. Since the “bridechamber” is where the divine beloved is first encountered in the heavenly realms, after the soul has left the body, the “gates” to the “bridechamber” are most likely a reference to the single eye:

Open unto me the gates of righteousness!
 The gates of the spiritual bridechamber
 are opened for the forgiveness of mankind,
 and now through the gift of the Spirit from heaven,
 mercy and love are given to everybody.
 Enter in therefore, O you who are called,
 into the joy that is prepared for you! ...
 For the gates of heaven are open before you.

Nestorian Liturgy; cf. MEM p.116, NR2 pp.285, 299

Usage is more specific among the gnostics, where a mystic gateway leading to the heavenly realms is frequently mentioned. Given their emphasis on *gnōsis*, on actual mystical experience, this can only be referring to the gateway to heaven that lies in the forehead. The clearest reference is in the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, which speaks of a “tenth gate” in “the head”,² the other nine being the sensory and other bodily outlets.

Manichaean psalms or hymns say that this “gate to the Height” is opened by “my familiar”³ – the light form of the saviour – and likewise:

The gates of the skies (heavens)
have opened before me through the rays of my saviour,
and his glorious likeness of light.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIV, MPB p.81

And again:

It has been granted me to see your light:
I have no concern therefore with the darkness.
Let no man weep for me therefore.
Lo, the gates of light have opened before me.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLII; cf. MPB p.62

In another hymn, the saviour himself is said to open multiple “gates” on the inward ascent of the soul through the heavenly regions:

I shall set open before you the gates in all the heavens,
and I shall make smooth your path,
free from terror and vexation.

Manichaean Hymns, Angad Rōshnān VI:66; cf. MHCP pp.150–51

Throughout the gnostic texts known as the *Pistis Sophia* and the *Books of Jeu*, Jesus similarly speaks of opening multiple gates on the soul’s inward journey. More specifically, he says that he has opened the “gates of the Light” through the gift of the mysteries (spiritual baptism). Again, the reference would seem to be to the gateway that lies in the head:

Now at this time as I have come I have opened the gates of the Light,
and have opened the ways that lead into the Light. And now there-
fore, let him who will do what is worthy of the mysteries, receive the
mysteries and go to the Light.

Pistis Sophia 350:135; cf. PS pp.700–1, PSGG p.293

See also: **city of nine gates** (5.1), **door, eye of a needle, tenth gate**.

1. *Matthew* 7:13–14, *KJV*.
2. *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* 6; cf. *NHS11* pp.216–17.
3. *Manichaeian Psalm Book* CCXXVI; cf. *MPB* p.19, *GVM* p.25.

ghar (H/Pu/U), **ghar dvāra** (H), **ghar mandir** (H/Pu), **ghar dār**, **ghar dar** (Pu)
Lit. home, house (*ghar*); the door (*dvāra*, *dar*) of the house (*ghar*), often in the sense of ‘home’ or ‘one’s own home (*svaghar*)’; the temple (*mandir*) of the house (*ghar*), a domestic shrine; mystically, either the soul’s spiritual home in eternity, or the soul’s earthly dwelling in the physical body, or the third eye or eye centre, the home or headquarters of the mind and the soul in the physical body. Many mystics have spoken of the body as the dwelling or temple of God, also calling it a ‘house of clay’, a ‘bag of dust’ and by other similar metaphors that highlight its impermanence. Esoterically, the *ghar dvāra* is that door in the human body that leads within, *i.e.* the third eye. *Dvāra* has several variants in local Hindi vernaculars.

Ideally, a home is a place of peace, rest, and comfort. However, real peace and happiness lie in concentration of the mind. A person is happy whenever his mind is calmly focused on something, but as soon as the object of concentration is withdrawn, the mind again feels restless and seeks something else to occupy it. Since the transitory world is characterized by continuous change, the focus of attention is constantly moving from one thing to another, the end result being a sense of unease and distress.

Indian *sants* (saints) have pointed out that even in the physical realm, while in the human body, the mind does have a natural focus or ‘home’ – one that is not subject to the continuous changes of the outer world. This home (*ghar*) of the mind is the eye centre. The mind can be concentrated at this point by means of repetition (*sumiran*) of names or a *mantra*, and can then function from this centre in a conscious and directed manner, dealing with all the events of life:

Remain in your own home (*ghar*), O my foolish and ignorant mind.

Meditate on the Lord:

concentrate deep within your being and meditate on Him.

Renounce your greed, and merge with the infinite Lord:

in this way, you shall find the door of liberation (*mukat duārā*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1030, AGK

Where are you going?

O mind, remain in your own home (*ghar*).

The *gurmukhs* are satisfied with the Lord’s Name:

searching, they easily find the Lord.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 414, AGK

If the mind becomes balanced and detached (*bairāgī*),
 and comes to dwell in its own true home (*ghar*),
 imbued with the fear of God –
 Then it enjoys the essence of supreme spiritual wisdom:
 it shall never feel hunger again.
 O Nānak, conquer and subdue this mind:
 meet with the Lord, and you shall never again suffer in pain.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 21, AGK

Somewhat similarly, since the “house” in which the soul and mind are dwelling for a short while is the body, the door of the house (*ghar duārā*) is the eye centre, by which the soul may leave the body:

O my mind, just consider
 where you have come from,
 where you will stay,
 and where lies the door of your house (*ghar duārā*)?

Jagjīvan Sāhib, Bānī 2, Updesh kā ang, Shabd 55:1, JSB2 p.31

But the true “home (*ghar*)” of the soul and the “door to the temple (*dar mandar*)” of the body, which leads to the higher realms and to God, can only be found with the help of a *guru*:

He alone knows the home (*ghar*) of his own heart
 and the door to the temple (*dar mandar*),
 who obtains perfect understanding from the *guru*.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1039, AGK

See also: **daswān dwār, dvāra.**

going in, going inside See **entering in.**

guāng (C) *Lit.* light, ray; brightness, lustre; in mystical Daoism, the inner light of the *Dào* that is present within every living creature.

The *Zhuāngzǐ* (c. C3rd BCE) relates a legendary encounter between Yuàn Fēng and Zhūn Máng, in which Zhūn Máng describes saintly people (*shénrén*) who “ascend on the light (*guāng*)”:

Men of the highest spiritual qualities ascend on the light (*guāng*)
 in the absence of the body. This we call being bright (*zhào*) and
 ethereal (*kuàng*).

Zhuāngzǐ 2; cf. TT1 p.324

The light (*guāng*) emanating from an enlightened sage is perceived only by one who has a consciousness sufficiently elevated to recognize it. Just as the *Dào* is hidden from the spiritually ignorant, the brightness of a sage's inner being is not always evident. The spiritual light emanating from within is subtle. Unlike a bright external light, it “does not dazzle”:

The sage (*shèngrén*) . . . is as bright as light (*guāng*), but does not dazzle.

Dàodé jīng 58, *SBCP* p.167

In spiritual practice, it is this mystic light that guides the practitioner towards the goal of union with the *Dào*. Spiritual illumination means “seeing” the *Dào* within, which is a hidden (“small”) secret. Sages teach that this inner light (*guāng*) illumines the consciousness:

Seeing what is small is called enlightenment (*míng*, clarity).

Adhering to meekness is called strength.

Using the light (*guāng*), return to enlightenment (*míng*),

and thereby avoid danger to your (spiritual) life.

This is called practising the eternal (*cháng*).

Dàodé jīng 52; cf. *SBCP* p.164

Daoists practise meditation to become aware of the inner light. One of the methods of meditation is called *shǒuyī* (being present with the One). According to the *Secret Instructions of the Holy Lord on the Scripture on Great Peace* (c.C9th), one can use this technique – which begins with sitting comfortably and quietly with eyes closed – to cultivate the faculty of inner sight:

With prolonged practice, your perception will become finer and subtler (*bīnbīn*). Automatically (*zì*) you will be able to see within your body.

The physical body will become gradually lighter (*qīng*), the vital essence (*jīng*) more brilliant, and the light (*guāng*) more concentrated.

Tàipíng jīng shèngjūn mìzhǐ, *DZ1102* 1b; cf. *TEAK* p.195

In the initial stages, however, there is generally only darkness within:

When your practice is insufficiently refined and you are not constantly present with the One (*shǒuyī*) and its light (*míng*), you may try with all your might in the darkness, you will still see no light (*guāng*) with your (inner) eye (*mù*).

Tàipíng jīng shèngjūn mìzhǐ, *DZ1102* 1b

In the absence of inner light, the practitioner continues to focus his attention in the darkness. As the consciousness is withdrawn and focused within,

the spirit becomes more refined or concentrated and, in time, inner light is perceived:

After practising being present with the One (*shǒuyī*) for a long time, brilliant light (*guāng*) will automatically appear. By the radiance (*zhāo*) of this light you will be able to see in all the four directions (*i.e.* everywhere). Submit to the light and you will travel afar (spiritually). By it, the condition (*xíngróng*) of yourself and your body (*shēn*) will be fully revealed.

Tàipíng jīng shèngjūn mìzhǐ, DZ1102 1b; cf. TEAK p.195

With continued practice, increased concentration leads to deeper inner perception:

By thus cultivating yourself (within), you will be inwardly transformed while continuing to lead a normal outer life. Inwardly, there will be perfect longevity (*i.e.* spiritual immortality); outwardly, there will be perfect harmony with the natural order of the universe. Without exerting a single muscle, you will automatically attain great peace (*tàipíng*).

Tàipíng jīng shèngjūn mìzhǐ, DZ1102 1b; cf. TEAK p.195

Another Daoist method of meditation, known as *huíguāng* (turning the light around, reversing the light), refers to reversing the flow of attention from outward to inward, through daily living as well as by meditation. The method is discussed at length in the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th), a text attributed to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE). In this treatise, the golden flower (*jīnhuá*) is a metaphor for the inner spiritual awareness and light (*guāng*), which is the *Dào*:

Reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is to refine the higher soul (*hún*) so that the spirit (*shén*) is preserved, so that the lower soul (*pò*) is restrained, and so that the intellect is abandoned.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 2, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

The mystical light (*guāng*) of *Dào* is always present. However, it is individual awareness that determines whether and when this light will be perceived. This awareness can be developed through the refining and purifying practice of meditation – the “firing process”, a metaphor derived from the alchemical production of the gold elixir, the elixir of immortality.

Inner light may be experienced as soon as some degree of stillness and concentration is attained. At first, the light may be perceived only as a brief flash because the mind is somewhat startled by it, causing the awareness to falter and lose sight of it as soon as it appears. With time (notionally, “a hundred days”) and some considerable effort, a greater level of awareness is attained, so that the inner light becomes steady and constant:

After a hundred days of practising concentration, the light (*guāng*) becomes true and turns into the fire of spirit (*shén*). Automatically, after a hundred days, one particle of the true *yáng* (i.e. spirituality, the positive spirit) within the light suddenly produces a bead the size of a millet grain. This (process) is like a husband and wife who have intercourse in order to create an embryo, but (the birth of the baby) must then be patiently awaited. The reversal of light (*guāng zhī huí*) is the firing process (*huǒhòu*).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 3, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Daoist teachers often use encouraging stock phrases such as ‘ten months’ or ‘one hundred days’ to signify the period of resolute practice required to achieve enlightenment. It is implicitly understood that the actual time will vary from individual to individual.

See also: **míng**, **shēng** (8.1), **zhào**.

gūsh (P) (pl. *gūshān*) *Lit.* ear; in Sufism, either a general reference to the obedience, devotion and vigilance of the seeker, or a specific reference to hearing the inner music of the divine Word (*Kalimah*). Jāmī speaks specifically of the faculty of inner hearing:

Those who possess sharp ears (*gūshān*):
 their faculty to hear has been transformed
 to another hearing by the primordial Light;
 They can hear His praise and glorification.

Jāmī, Haft Awrang, HA p.55

Ḥāfiẓ says that when the inner being awakens to divine love, every part of the soul becomes like an eye and ear, intent upon the divine presence:

In the sanctuary of love,
 no human word is ever heard nor utterance allowed;
 For there, every part of you awakes,
 to become an eye and an ear (*gūsh*).

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.148, DIH p.257; cf. DHWC (325:7) p.563, in SSEI p.112

Sa’dī describes how the spiritual form of his beloved came to him, lifting him to the higher worlds. His outer senses were left behind, but his inner ears were awakened to the call of the divine “messenger” – his spiritual master:

You came in through the door, and my senses left me:
 You might say that I had been transported
 from this world to another.

My ears (*gūsh*) were alert to hear
 who would bring me news of the Beloved.
 The messenger came, and I became senseless.

I was lying like a dewdrop before the sun:
 Love descended upon my soul,
 and I ascended to the star Capella.

Sa'dī, Tayyibāt 249:1–3, KSSS p.301; cf. TOS p.340

Rūmī speaks in many places of the inner music and of the soul's inner faculty of hearing. The prophets are in tune with this Melody, but the ears of the worldly are beguiled by sensory distractions. But once the soul begins to hear the inner Melody, it rises up from the body, as though escaping from a tomb:

The prophets also have (spiritual) notes (*naghm ḥā*) within,
 whence there comes life beyond price to them that seek.
 The sensual ear (*gūsh-i ḥiss*) does not hear those notes,
 for the sensual ear (*gūsh-i ḥiss*) is defiled by iniquities....

If I tell even a tittle of those notes (*naghm ḥā*),
 the souls will lift up their heads from their (bodily) tombs.
 Put your ear (*gūsh*) close, for that (Melody) is not far off,
 but it is not possible to convey it to you.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1919–20, 28–29; cf. MJR2 pp.104–5

The endless mental spinning of words and intellect also makes the mind and soul deaf to the inner Call of God:

Beware, you who are enslaved by words and talk,
 you who seek counsel in the speech of the tongue and ear.
 Put cotton wool in the ear (*gūsh*) of the lower sense,
 remove that bandage from your (inner) eyes (*chashm*)!
 The ear of the head (*gūsh-i sar*) is the cotton wool
 of the inner ear (*gūsh-i sirr*):
 Until the former becomes deaf,
 that inward ear (*gūsh-i bāṭin*) is deaf.
 Become without sense and without ear (*gūsh*) and without thought,
 that you may hear the Call, "Return (*Irjī'ī*)!"

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:565–68; cf. MJR2 p.33

Other Sufis have said the same. Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659), eldest son and heir designate of the Mughal Emperor, Shāh Jahān, quotes an unattributed source:

Put your ear (*gūsh*) to your own heart, and speak and hear,
because the world is full, through and through,
with His incomparable and soundless Voice (*Ṣadā-yi bī-navā*).

Unattributed, in Risālah-ʿi Ḥaqq Numā, RHND p.13; cf. COT p.18

Shāh Niyāz Barelvī says that the Sound is everywhere and within everything. Those that hear can go through the process of dying while living, and come to know the divine Source of all things:

The whole world is replete with Sound (*Āvāz*),
but you have to open your inner ear (*gūsh*).
Then you will hear that never ending Voice (*Kalām*) (of God),
will cross the gates of death,
and will go beyond the beginning and end of things.

Shāh Niyāz Barelvī, Dīvān, Maṣnaviyāt 3, DNB p.90

See also: **Āvāz** (3.1).

gyān dṛishṭī (H) *Lit.* vision (*dṛishṭī*) of wisdom (*gyān*); eye of wisdom, eye of enlightenment; the inner eye or inner vision that sees the spiritual reality.

Sahajobāī says that with such vision, the world is realized to be just a dream or an illusion:

For the eye of wisdom (*gyān dṛishṭī*), O Sahjo,
millions of years are but a single moment;
And this world, which in our dream appears as real,
dissolves and turns into something else.

Sahajobāī, Bānī, Satt bairāg jagat mithyā kā ang, Dohā 2, SBB p.36

See also: **chakshus**.

ḥarq (A/P), **ḥurqah** (A), **ḥurqat** (P) *Lit.* burning, glow, radiance; spiritually, the radiance of a pure soul; experience of the light within that ‘burns’ or annihilates the ego-self. The intermediate stage in the process of inner illumination “which draws the seeker towards annihilation (*fanā*)” is said by al-Qāshānī to start with *barq* (lightning, brilliant flashes of inner light) and to culminate in *al-ṭamasa fī al-Dhāt* (invisibility in the Essence, obliteration in the Essence). *Ḥarq* (burning) is an intermediate stage.¹ Hujwīrī notes:

It is inward glow (*hurqat*) that makes the *ṣūfī*, not the religious habit (*khirqat*).

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM pp.52–53, KM p.47

See also: **ātish** (►4), **barq**, **sūz** (►4).

1. Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 120, *GSTA* p.36; cf. *GST* p.27.

hashmal (He) *Lit.* electrum (an alloy of gold and silver); also translated as ‘amber’; something with the colour of gold or bronze; in a biblical context, the colour of the “brightness” seen by the prophet Ezekiel during his inner visions:

And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire flaring up, so that a brightness was around it – and out of its midst, as the colour of *hashmal*, out of the midst of the fire.

Ezekiel 1:4; cf. JCL

Later in the vision, he sees

the likeness of a throne, in appearance like lapis lazuli; and upon the likeness of the throne was a being with the likeness of a man. And he shone with the colour of *hashmal*; and close to and all around him from what seemed his loins upwards was what looked like fire; and from what seemed his loins downwards, I saw what looked like fire, and a light all round like a rainbow in the clouds on rainy days; that is how the surrounding light appeared.¹

Ezekiel 1:26–27; cf. JB, JCL, RSV

Ezekiel’s evocative and colourful imagery influenced the way in which later Jewish mystics described their experiences. A vision depicted in a similar manner appears in one of the hymns among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which the inner light is again described as “streams of fire like *hashmal*”:

Praise the God of cycles of wonder and exalt Him.
 Glory is in the tabernacle of the God of knowledge.
 The cherubim fall before Him and bless Him.
 As they rise the sound of divine stillness (is heard).
 There is a tumult of jubilation –
 as they lift up their wings the sound of divine stillness is heard.
 The cherubim bless the form of the chariot-throne,
 (which is) above the firmament of the cherubim.

And they sing and praise the splendour of the luminous firmament,
 (which is) beneath His glorious seat.
 When the *ofanim* (wheels, a class of angel) move, the holy angels return.
 They emerge from His glorious wheels like the appearance of fire,
 spirits of the holy of holies round about,
 between the appearance of (mighty) streams of fire like *hashmal*.

Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, 4Q405 20.ii–22:6–10, SSSN p.303

Jewish sages have speculated about the nature of *hashmal*-coloured radiance, and the sounds and lights associated with it. Citing *Ezekiel*, the medieval *Zohar* describes the vision, but concludes, “None can comprehend it”:

“And from its midst like the colour of *hashmal*.” ... This *hashmal* is the colour of a flashing, sparkling fire, ascending and descending, shining and flashing. On one side, a single ray emerges, shining, sparkling and flashing, existing but not existing, standing but not standing. And there is another similar one on this side, and one on another side, and so on all four sides. This one speaks to that, and that to this, and so with all of them so that they are one. Then the rays shine with a single resplendence. It ascends and descends, moves and stops, is visible and invisible, is and is not. None can comprehend it. The rays come back in the vision of the creatures, as at the beginning. The thoughts (of the prophet) are confused by it, and the heart can find no rest. This is the mystery of *hashmal*.

Zohar Hadash, Yitro 38a, WZ2 p.619

In *Sefer ha-‘Iyun* (‘Book of Contemplation’), stemming from a thirteenth-century Spanish mystical fraternity dubbed by Gershom Scholem ‘the *‘Iyun* Circle’, the process of creation is described as having taken place through the emanation of various stages of light which originated in the primordial light of Wisdom. According to this description, this primordial light creates the “marvellous light (*aur ha-mufla*)”, from which emanates the light of *hashmal*.

See also: **merkavah** (8.5).

1. Cf. *Ezekiel* 8:2.

hawāss (A/P), **hawāss-i jān**, **hawāss-i nūr** (P) *Lit.* senses (*hawāss*, sg. *hiss*); senses of the soul (*jān*); senses (*hawāss*) of the light (*nūr*); the faculties of inner perception; the spiritual senses; the spiritual faculties by which the inner realms are perceived.

Rūmī likens the awakening of these senses to taking birth in a new and more “ample world”, exhorting his reader to exert himself, to “bestir yourself a little” in order to experience them:

Bestir yourself a little, like the embryo, in order that you may be
 given senses that behold the light (*ḥawāss-i nūr bīn*).
 Then you will be outside this womb-like world:
 you will go forth from the earth into a wide expanse.
 Know that the saying, “God’s earth is wide,”¹
 refers to that ample world which the saints have entered.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3180–82; cf. MJR2 p.173

Speaking of the same inner senses, he says that they all arise from one internal source of perception, and when one sense is awakened, it automatically awakens the others:

The five (spiritual) senses (*pañj-ḥiss*) are linked to one another,
 because all these five have grown from one root.
 The strength of one becomes the strength of the rest:
 each one becomes a cupbearer to the rest.
 Seeing with the eye increases speech,
 and speech increases sharpness of vision.
 The opening of vision awakens the other senses (*ḥiss*),
 so that spiritual perception becomes familiar
 to all the senses (*ḥiss ḥā*)...
 When one sense (*ḥiss*) has loosed its bonds,
 all the rest of the senses (*ḥiss ḥā*) become changed.
 When one sense (*ḥiss*) has perceived things
 that are not objects of sense-perception,
 that which is of the invisible world
 becomes apparent to all the senses (*ḥiss ḥā*).

When one sheep of the flock has jumped over the stream,
 then they all jump across on each other’s heels.
 Drive the sheep, your senses (*ḥawāss*), to pasture:
 let them browse on “He who has brought forth herbage,”²
 that there they may browse on hyacinth and wild rose;
 That they may make their way
 to the verdant meadows of the realities (*ḥaqā’iq*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:3236–44; cf. MJR2 pp.389–90

Since these faculties are latent in everyone, yet few are fortunate to have them awakened, Rūmī likens them to senses that see the sun of Reality,

contrasting them with the physical senses that run “towards the sunset” – that seek spiritual darkness:

Your bat-like senses (*ḥiss-i khuffāsh*) are running towards the sunset;
 Your pearl-spangled (spiritual) senses (*ḥiss-i durpāsh*)
 are faring towards the sunrise.
 The way of (physical) sense perception (*rāh-i ḥiss*)
 is the way of asses, O rider:
 Have shame, O you who are jostling with asses!

Besides these five senses (*pañj-ḥiss*),
 there are five other senses (*pañj-ḥiss*):
 Those are like red gold,
 while these senses (*ḥiss ḥā*) are like copper.
 In the bazaar, where they are expert,
 how should they buy the copper sense (*ḥiss-i mis*)
 as if it were the sense of gold (*ḥiss-i zar*)?
 The bodily sense (*ḥiss-i badan*) is eating the food of darkness:
 the spiritual sense (*ḥiss-i jān*) is feeding from a sun.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:47–51; cf. MJR2 p.224

The source of these spiritual senses, which go with the soul beyond the physical death, is the divine Being:

From Your infinite bounty, there came an (inward) eye (*chashm*)
 to the falcon-soul that was flying for Your sake.
 From You, its nose gained (the inward sense of) smell,
 and its ear (*gūsh*) the (inward) hearing (*samāʿ*):
 To each sense (*ḥiss*) was allotted a portion
 (of the spiritual sense that was) distributed (among them all).
 Since You give to each sense (*ḥiss*)
 the means of access to the Unseen,
 that (spiritual) sense (*ḥiss*) is not subject
 to the frailty of old age and death.
 You are the Lord of the kingdom:
 You give to the (spiritual) sense (*ḥiss*)
 something special so that that sense (*ḥiss*)
 exercises sovereignty over all the senses (*ḥiss ḥā*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:2812–15; cf. MJR6 pp.413–14

See also: **ḥawāss**.

1. *Qurʾān* 39:10.
2. *Qurʾān* 87:4.

hozeh, hizayon (He) *Lit.* vision (*hizayon*); to see, to behold, to contemplate (*hozeh*); mystically, spiritual vision, contemplation; from the verbal root *hazah* (to perceive, to see, to behold, to gaze at, to contemplate, to prophesy). According to the *Psalms*:

Yahweh is righteous, He loves virtue:
the upright will contemplate (*yehezu*) His face.

Psalms 11:7; cf. JB, JCL

The reward of virtue, says the psalmist, is the vision of God's 'face'; God is aware of human actions, and will reveal His presence to those who live a spiritual life.

As a noun, *hozeh* also means a seer – a biblical term for a prophet who can see into the future and perceive the reality of things.

See also: **hozeh** (7.1).

hṛiday(a), hṛid (S/H), hirda (H), hiya, hirdai (H/Pu) *Lit.* heart; breast, chest; hence also, mind, soul, life; spiritual centre. Many mystics have spoken of the heart of man as the centre of his mind and soul. Generally, they are using the term 'heart' in a metaphorical sense. The physical heart – the centre of physical existence – lies in the chest. But, for a human being, the spiritual heart – the centre of being – lies midway between the two eyebrows. This is the seat or headquarters of the mind and soul in the human body, also known as the eye centre, single eye, or third eye (*tīsrā til*).

Since it is a seat of emotion and feeling, the heart is sometimes regarded as the true centre of being, rather than the eye centre in the forehead. This is because, for the majority of people, the attention plays outwardly, away from the eye centre, falling to the heart and lower centres. Consequently, the heart is felt to be the locus of being and thought, since feelings and emotions are experienced there. But below the eye centre, away from the seat of human consciousness, the mind acts mostly out of habit, is subject to the senses and emotions, and is largely unconscious or unaware of itself, its thoughts, and its feelings. The true seat of consciousness lies behind the eyes, and this is what the mystics usually refer to as the true heart of man.

Metaphorically, the heart of something is its core or essence. In the *Upanishads* and the writings of later Indian mystics and devotees, the heart (*hṛidaya*) refers not only to the physical organ, but also to various aspects of the inner human constitution. Depending on the context, the *hṛidaya* can refer to the *prāṇa* (subtle life energies), the intellect (*buddhi*), the mind (*manas*), consciousness (*chit*), or the *ātman* (soul or self). It is also one of the names of the *chakra* (centre of *prāṇa*) situated at the level of the heart (*hṛidaya* or *anāhata chakra*). The heart is the focus of many channels (*nāḍīs*) of *prāṇa*.

As a result, many emotions as well as the presence of the Divine can be felt in the heart.

When it comes to spiritual practice, concentration in the heart may mean just that – focusing at the level of the physical heart, particularly in the *hṛidaya chakra*. Alternatively, it may mean concentration at the eye centre. Or, more generally, to hold or to feel God in one's heart is a simple way of saying that His presence is felt within one's own being. Sometimes, it is difficult to be certain whether a general or specific meaning is intended.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* says that God dwells in the realm (*desha*) of the human heart:

The Lord abides in the hearts (*hṛidaya-desha*) of all beings,
revolving them all by his mysterious power of *māyā*,
like objects mounted on a machine.
Surrender completely to Him, O Bhārata, and by His grace
you will obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode.

Bhagavad Gītā 18:61–62

The *Kaṭha Upanishad* speaks of the knots and ropes of *karma*, desire, spiritual ignorance and so on, which bind the human heart:

When all the desires that dwell within the human heart (*hṛidaya*) are ended, then a mortal becomes immortal, and attains *Brahman*, even here. When all the knots that bind the heart (*hṛidaya*) here are severed, then a mortal becomes immortal.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3.14–15

Reiterating the message, the ninth-century Indian philosopher and mystic Shankara likewise says that only when the human heart is freed from all encumbrances can it realize the supreme Self:

When the *Ātman* (Self), the One without a second, is realized by means of *samādhi avikalpena* (unconditioned absorption in *Brahman*), then the heart's (*hṛidaya*) knot of ignorance is totally destroyed. . . .

If the heart's (*hṛidaya*) knot of ignorance is totally destroyed, what natural cause can there be for inducing such a man to selfish action – the man who is averse to sense pleasures? . . .

Liberation consists in destruction of the heart's (*hṛidaya*) knot, which is (spiritual) ignorance.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 353, 423, 558; cf. *VCSM* pp.134, 160, 207

Shankara also speaks of the heart as the inner being, where the true self or soul (*ātman*) is realized:

The *ātman*, the sun of knowledge that rises in the space within the heart (*hṛidaya*), destroys the darkness, pervades all, sustains all, and shines and makes everything shine.

Shankara, Ātmabodha 67; cf. ABSC pp.121–22

The *Aitareya Upanishad* distinguishes between the innermost self or soul, the *ātman*, and the heart (*hṛidaya*) and mind (*manas*), which is comprised of all the human faculties:

Who is this one? We worship him as the self (*ātman*). Which one is the self? That by which one sees, by which one hears, by which one smells, by which one utters speech, by which one distinguishes the sweet from the unsweet.

What is the heart (*hṛidaya*) and mind (*manas*)? It is consciousness (*saṃjñāna*), perception, discrimination, intelligence, wisdom, insight, steadfastness, thought, consideration, impulse, memory, conception, intention, life, desire, and will. All these are names for consciousness (*prajñāna*).

Aitareya Upanishad 3:1.1–2

The *Kaivalya Upanishad*, quoting the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, advocates meditation in the innermost heart as the way to seek the immortal *Brahman*:

Seek to know (*Brahman*) by faith, devotion, and meditation. Not by (good) deeds, nor by progeny or wealth, but by renunciation is immortality attained. Higher than heaven, shining in a secret place (*guhā*), the self-controlled ones enter in.

“These self-controlled ones, pure in mind, who have clearly understood the knowledge of *Vedānta* through renunciation – they, at the end of time, dwelling in the world of *Brahmā* (the creator god), are all liberated and gain the highest immortality.”¹

In a clean and secluded place, sit in an relaxed posture, with head, neck and body erect, having controlled all the senses, bowing (inwardly) with devotion to the *guru*, meditating within the lotus of the heart (*hṛidaya puṇḍarīka*) on the Untainted, the Pure, the Sorrowless, the Inconceivable, the Unmanifest, possessed of infinite forms, the Auspicious, the Tranquil, the Immortal, the Source of *Brahmā*, the One without beginning, middle or end, the All-pervading, consciousness and bliss, the Formless, and the Wonderful.

Kaivalya Upanishad 2–7

All these usages refer symbolically to the human heart as the abode of the soul. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, on the other hand, speaks of *Brahman* itself as the heart of all:

The heart (*hṛidaya*) is the abode of all beings and the heart (*hṛidaya*) is the support of all beings. On the heart (*hṛidaya*) are all beings established. Verily, the heart (*hṛidaya*) is the supreme *Brahman*. The heart (*hṛidaya*) never deserts him who knowing thus, worships it as such.²

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 4:1.7, PU pp.250–52

The *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* says that God is at the heart of all human beings, though human perception of Him is limited by the mind and intellect:

Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest,
is the *ātman* (soul, self),
hidden in a secret place (*guhā*) within man. . . .
This Divine, the creator of the universe, the supreme Soul (*Mahātmā*),
dwells forever in the heart (*hṛidaya*) of beings who are
limited by the heart (*hṛidaya*), thought (*manīshā*), and mind (*manas*).
They who realize this become immortal. . . .
His form cannot be seen,
no one beholds Him with the eyes.
Those who, with heart (*hṛidaya*) and mind,
see Him dwelling in the heart (*hṛidaya*) become immortal.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 1:3.20, 4:17, 20

Some of the *Upanishads* refer specifically to the yogic path of *prāṇāyāma* and *kuṇḍalinī*, which involves raising the concentrated attention from the lowest *chakra*, up through the *sushumṇā* – the central *nāḍī* (channel of *prāṇa* or subtle life energy) that runs up the spine through the six *chakras* of the body – until the soul leaves the body through the *brahmarandhra* at the top of the head. The fourth *chakra* on this ascent, the *hṛidaya chakra*, is at the level of the heart. In this context, concentration in the heart literally means focusing the attention at the heart *chakra*:

In the midst of the heart (*hṛidaya*) is a mass of red flesh. Within it blooms a small white lotus, its petals spread in different directions like the lily. In the heart (*hṛidaya*) are ten hollows, in which the *prāṇas* (subtle life energies) have their place. When the individual soul is united with the *prāṇa*, then he sees rivers and cities, many and varied.

Subāla Upanishad 4:1

Yogic texts commonly speak of a space (*ākāsha*) within the heart, which is to be understood as a ‘space’ of consciousness or awareness, experienced subjectively during inner meditation and concentration. The *Taittirīya Upanishad*, which in the full context is speaking of these yogic practices, says:

There is a space (*ākāsha*) within the heart (*antar-hṛidaya*) – therein is the being consisting of mind (*manas*), immortal and resplendent.

Taittirīya Upanishad 1:6.1, PU p.533

In a similar vein, the *Brahma Upanishad* speaks of four seats of consciousness within the body, of which the highest is the head. These four seats relate to the four states (*avasthās*) of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and superconsciousness:

Now this being (*purusha*) has four seats, the navel, the heart (*hṛidaya*), the throat, and the head. In these, *Brahman* shines forth in four aspects: the state of wakefulness (*jāgrat*), of dream (*svapna*), of dreamless sleep (*sushupta*), and the fourth (*turīya*, transcendental) state. . . . Within the recess of the heart (*hṛidaya*) lies the space (*ākāsha*) of consciousness – having many openings, the goal of wisdom within the space of the heart (*hṛidaya*) – in which all this outer universe evolves and moves, in which all this outer universe is fabricated and brought into being. He who knows this, fully knows all creation.

Brahma Upanishad 3; cf. MUM pp.52–54

Likewise, Patañjali writes:

The heart (*hṛidaya*) is regarded as the seat of the mind (*chitta*). From deep concentration (*saṃyama*) on the heart (*hṛidaya*), arises awareness of mind (*chitta*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:34–35

Among later Indian mystics, it seems clear that ‘heart’ refers to the spiritual centre, not to the physical heart or the *hṛidaya chakra*:

When life becomes dry,
 come (Lord), shower Your compassion.
 When all sweetness is lost,
 come (Lord) with the nectar of songs.
 When *karma*, assuming powerful form,
 creates a deafening noise on every side –
 O Lord of my life,
 step into my heart (*hrudaya*) with Your peace-bearing feet.
Rabindranath Tagore, Sangīt, Jīvan jakhan sukāi jāy; cf. in SSI2 pp.280–81

Says Kabīr, he alone is perfect in this world,
 in whose heart (*hirdai*) there is none other than the Lord.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 330, AGK

Whenever the Name (*Nām*) is fixed in the heart (*hirde*),
all sin is destroyed,
as the smallest spark of fire consumes dry grass.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Nām kā ang 11, KSS p.84

Embed the Lord's Name
within your heart (*hirdai*).
It's a rare diamond –
priceless, pure, and bright.

Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Pad 321, KG p.147, KWGN p.318

The Lord is totally pervading and permeating each and every heart.
The jewel of the *Nām* (Name) is revealed within the hearts (*hirdai*)
of those who hurry to the sanctuary of the *guru*.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1334, AGK

Those people within whose hearts (*hirdai*) the Lord abides
are radiant and enlightened.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 27, AGK

My heart (*hirda*) is the place
in which the flame of *Shabd* forever burns.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:4.3, SBP p.52

Keep the *guru*'s form in your heart (*hirde*),
and hold the mind steady.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 15:9.9, SBP p.119

O Charandās, dwell forever
in the heart (*hiya*) of Sahjo!

Sahajobāī, Bānī, Mishrit pad, Rāg bilāval 1, SBB p.51

With the grace of her master Charandās,
Sahjo's heart (*hiya*) is filled with bliss.

Sahajobāī, Bānī, Mishrit pad, SBB p.54

See also: **dil** (►1).

1. *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:2.6.
2. *Cf. Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 5:3.1, 5:6.1.

huángtíng (C) *Lit.* yellow (*huáng*) court (*tíng*); yellow palace. In Chinese symbolism, yellow may signify either centre or earth. Hence, in some forms of Daoist

meditation, *huángtíng* refers to a centre of concentrated visualization in one of the three bodily fields of elixir (*dāntián*) – the lower abdomen, the heart, and between the eyebrows. *Huángtíng* is also one of the nine palaces of the brain (which are regarded as a reflection of the nine palaces or lower heavens) and is referred to in alchemical texts as the ‘cauldron’. *Huángtíng* can also mean one’s will or sense of intention as the centre of one’s individual self.

See also: **míngtáng**.

inner ears See **inner hearing**.

inner eye, inner sight, inner vision See **eyes of the soul**.

inner hearing, spiritual sense of hearing The spiritual faculty through which the mind and soul can hear in the inner realms of consciousness; the faculty that hears the divine music of the Word – the Voice of God; also known as the ears of the mind or the ears of the soul; sometimes, hearing or listening to human words with a spiritual understanding.

Mystic literature contains many references to this faculty. The gnostic writer of the *Testimony of Truth* is specific:

I will speak to those who know to hear not with the ears of the body,
but with the ears of the mind. For many have sought after the Truth
and have not been able to find it; because there has taken hold of them
the old leaven of the Pharisees and the scribes of the Law.

Testimony of Truth 29, NHS15 pp.122–23

The “Law” is the Jewish *Torah*, and the “leaven of the Pharisees” is an allusion to *Matthew*,¹ where Jesus advises his disciples to beware of religious dogma or the interpretations of religious authorities, which can lead people astray from the true spiritual path. The author is also alluding to a saying of Jesus:

Blessed are your eyes, for they see:
and your ears, for they hear.
For verily I say unto you,
that many prophets and righteous men
have desired to see those things that you see,
and have not seen them;
And to hear those things that you hear,
and have not heard them.

Matthew 13:16–17; cf. *KJV*

Jesus is reminding his disciples how lucky they are, for they see and hear things within themselves that holy men and spiritual seekers of the past have longed to see and hear, but have been unable to do so.

There are many places in John's gospel where Jesus speaks of the inner faculty of the soul and mind to hear the Word or Voice of God. In the style so characteristic of this gospel, this is often conveyed by means of wordplay and double meaning. For instance:

The dead shall hear the Voice (*Phōnē*) of the Son of God:
and they that hear shall live.

John 5:25, KJV

Here, the "Voice of the Son of God" is the mystic Sound or Voice of God; and the "dead" are Jesus' disciples who were once spiritually "dead" through entanglement with the senses or who have become dead to the world by listening to the mystic Voice. Either way, those that hear this music "shall live" – will find the eternal life of God within. Jesus also speaks of hearing the Word of God. He does not speak of listening to his teachings. He means listening to the divine Voice or word within:

The Word (*Logos*) that you hear is not mine,
but the Father who has sent me.

John 14:24; cf. KJV

There are several other places in *John*, where Jesus speaks of hearing the mystic Word of God.² In *Acts*, there is also the remarkable story of the 'descent of the Holy Ghost':

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,
they were all with one accord in one place.
And suddenly there came a sound from heaven
as of a rushing mighty wind,
and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,
and it sat upon each of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,
and began to speak with other tongues,
as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1–4, KJV

Whatever the writer of *Acts* may have understood by it, his story is evidently based upon a mystical tradition, here externalized and turned into a physical event. The "sound from heaven" is not from the physical "heaven" or sky above, nor is it a physical wind. It is the divine Sound of the Word. The house where

the disciples hear this Sound is the house of their own body. The Sound is heard within themselves. It is also seen by them like the flame of a candle – “cloven tongues like as of fire”. But again, this is a reference to an inner experience. Many mystics have spoken of the inner light as an eternal flame that never dies. Being filled with the Holy Ghost, they speak the language of the Spirit, the language of love and mystic understanding – not the languages of this world.

This interpretation of Jesus’ words is borne out by the mystic writers of his time. In the Manichaean psalms, for instance, the psalmist says:

Christ is the Word of Truth:
 he that hears it shall live.
Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.158

And in another, where “Wisdom” is another name for the “Word”:

Lo, Wisdom is flourishing:
 but where is there an ear to hear it?
Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.153

And again:

The Word of God is sweet
 when it finds ears to hear it.
 It lodges not in a mind that is shut,
 it makes not its way to a shrine (body) that is polluted.
 It lodges with the maidens,
 and dwells in the heart of the continent.
 They with whom it lodges – its grace spreads over them.
 They gird up their loins and arm themselves
 to fight with the Dragon.
Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.151

Those who hear the sweetness of the Word of God are the “maidens”, the pure souls, who are enabled thereby to fight with the devil (“the Dragon”), implying the negative habits and tendencies of an impure mind. In another psalm, the writer expresses the converse. Those who cover their eyes and do not listen to his mystic Call are as if dead, for they hear nothing of the divine music:

He who covers his eyes with his fingers,
 who shall come to him?
 Into whose ears shall they call, if he hears not? ...
 He shall suffer what corpses suffer,
 for when they called into his ears, he did not hear.
Manichaean Psalm Book XIV; cf. MPB p.221

In a similar vein, the unknown writer of the psalms from the Dead Sea Scrolls attributes all his mystic knowledge to the Wisdom of God by which “Thou hast unstopped my ears to marvellous mysteries”:

These things I know
by the Wisdom which comes from Thee,
for Thou hast unstopped my ears
to marvellous mysteries.

Thanksgiving Hymns 6:20–25, CDSV p.260

And:

How shall I look,
unless Thou open my eyes?
Or hear,
unless Thou unstop my ears?
My heart is astounded,
for to the uncircumcised ear
a Word has been disclosed,
and a heart of stone
has understood the right precepts....
For into an ear of dust, Thou hast put a new Word
and hast engraved on a heart of stone, things everlasting.
Thou hast caused the straying spirit to return.

Thanksgiving Hymns 24:15–30, CDSV pp.298–99

The “uncircumcised ear” is a reference to a metaphor used by Jewish biblical commentators in which they explain that the circumcision that truly has any spiritual value is the circumcision of the heart, the removal of all impurity from around the soul.³ Here, the writer says that though “uncircumcised” or impure, yet he has heard the Word of God and come to understand the true path to God – “has understood the right precepts”. Similarly, the “ear of dust” is his earthly human hearing to which “a new Word” has been revealed, by means of which the “straying spirit” – the soul that has wandered endlessly in the round of birth and death – is “caused ... to return” to God.

References to hearing the mystic Sound are found throughout all mystic writings. Zarathushtra speaks of the Sound, which he calls the *Sraosha*. Many of the references in the Old Testament to God’s Word and Speech are probably allegorical allusions to the inner Sound, for God does not speak out of the clouds in any human voice. In fact, going back in time, it is noticeable that mystic writings become more allegorical and less explicit, according to our modern way of thinking. Many of the above quotations are definitive, and there is no doubt as to the meaning. This is not always the case with the older Jewish literature, as in the Bible.

Maybe the persecution meted out in ancient times to those who followed the mystic path made it necessary for them to speak under the veil of a parable. But necessity also became a source of beauty and inspiration, for many lyrical expressions came into common use to describe the mystic realities. Hence, the wisdom writers spoke of ‘listening’ to Wisdom, the divine Word, and enjoying “the fellowship of her conversation”⁴ or speech – the Voice of God. Likewise, the mystic lover in the *Song of Songs* says of the divine beloved, “his conversation is sweetness itself”.⁵

There are other instances, too, where a double meaning is probably implied – of listening both to the external teachings and to the inner Sound. Thus, in *Proverbs*, Wisdom says:

And now, my sons, listen to me:
listen to instruction and learn to be wise....
Happy those who keep my ways!
Happy the man who listens to me....
For the man who finds me finds Life.

Proverbs 8:32–35, JB

And similarly in the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*:

Happy the man who meditates on Wisdom,...
he peeps in at her windows,
and listens at her doors....
Whoever listens to me (Wisdom) will never have to blush,
whoever acts as I dictate will never sin.

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 14:20, 23, 24:22, JB

Many later mystics in both Christianity and Judaism have also spoken of the soul’s sense of hearing. Gregory of Nyssa, commenting on the verse from the *Song of Songs*, “I hear my beloved”, says:

This ... is the sound of a Voice that calls the soul, through its spiritual sense of hearing, to a contemplation of the mysteries.

Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 6, PG44 cols.888c ff., GGG p.199

Spiritual hearing and spiritual ears also refer metaphorically to hearing with spiritual understanding. But although this may be the intended meaning in some instances, it is not always so.

See also: **ears of the soul, man** (5.1), **Voice** (3.1), **Word** (3.1).

1. *Matthew* 16:6, 11–12.

2. *John* 3:8, 6:63, 8:43, 47, *KJV*.

3. See e.g. *Deuteronomy* 10:16; *Jeremiah* 4:4; Philo Judaeus, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3:46, 48, 52, *QAGP* pp.241, 246, 253; *Midrash Numbers Rabbah*, *NRMP* 12:10.
4. *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:18, *JB*.
5. *Song of Songs* 5:16, *JB*.

inner vision, inner sight, spiritual vision, spiritual sight The faculty of the soul and higher mind that enables perception of light and other inner phenomena; the natural faculty of the soul and higher mind that is able to perceive the inner light, especially when the attention is focused in interior prayer or contemplation, and enters the higher realms of consciousness; also called, the eyes of the soul, the eyes of the mind, and so on. The existence of such a faculty and the inner experiences that result from it have been attested by mystics from probably all races, religions, and times.

Speaking of the awakening of inner vision, the third-century Plotinus, writes:

Close your eyes, and call instead upon another kind of vision (*opsis*), which is to be awakened within you, which everyone has but few use. And this inner vision (*opsis*), what does it see? Newly awakened, it is all too feeble to see the ultimate Splendour. Therefore, the soul must be trained.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:6.8–9; cf. PAI pp.256–59, PEC p.25

After discussing the perception of beauty in this world, he continues:

But there are more primal and more lofty beauties than these. In our sense-bound life, we are no longer granted to know them, but the soul, taking no help from the bodily organs, sees and proclaims them. To the vision (*theasasthai*) of these we must mount, leaving sense to its own low place. . . .

Such vision (*idontes*) is only for those who see with the soul's sight – and at that vision (*idontes*), they will rejoice, and awe will fall upon them and a heartache deeper than anything else could ever stir, for now they are moving in the realm of Truth. This is the spirit that Beauty must ever induce: wonderment and a delicious heartache, longing and love, and a trembling that is all delight.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:6.4; cf. PEC p.23

Many Christian mystics have likewise written of the soul's ability to see within. It is, says Isaac of Nineveh, a matter of contemplation and withdrawal of the mind from the bodily senses:

Spiritual discipline is service without the senses; this is what has been written by the fathers: that when the mind of the saints was gifted with

personal contemplation, then the heaviness of body was taken away. And further on, sight will become spiritual sight.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 40, Stages of the Path; cf. MTIN p.203

Speaking of the “sweetness of God and the flame of His love which burns in the heart”, he further describes how “spiritual sight” develops through “recitation and prayer”:

From time to time, he will become drunk by it as by wine; his limbs will relax, his mind will stand still and his heart will follow God as a captive. . . . And in the same measure as his inner senses are strengthened, so will this (inner) sight be strengthened. And in the same measure as he is careful about discipline and watchfulness, and applies himself to recitation and prayer, so will the power of (inner) sight become established and fixed in him.

In truth, my brethren, he that attains this state (of a sweet and burning love) from time to time, will not remember that he is clad with a body, nor will he know that he is in the world. This is the beginning of spiritual sight in a man, and this is the basis of all spiritual revelations. By this, the spirit will be educated concerning hidden things and will become mature; and by this will he be gradually elevated to other things that are higher than human nature. In short, it is by this that all divine visions and spiritual revelations that the saints receive in this world will be given to a man.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 47, On Angelic Emotions; cf. MTIN pp.226–27

The understanding that inner vision is lost when the attention focuses on the body and the world is underlined by Walter Hilton by reference to the *Genesis* story:¹

When Adam had sinned, his inward vision and spiritual light were withdrawn and his outward eyes were opened, so that he felt and saw a new light of bodily pleasure and love of the world previously unknown to him.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:24, LPH pp.164–65

To once more awaken inner vision, the soul must retrace its downward path, and withdraw attention from “outward things”. The greater the withdrawal, the keener the inner sight:

The more deeply I am at rest from outward things, the more awake I am to the knowledge of God and of inward things. I cannot be awake to Jesus unless I am asleep to the world. So while the grace of God closes the bodily eyes, the soul is asleep to the vanities of the world: the eyes of the spirit are opened, and it wakes to the sight of God’s majesty hidden within the clouds of His precious humanity. . . .

Through this sleep, the soul is brought from the turmoil of worldly desires into peace and, through this awakening, it is raised up to the sight of God and spiritual things. The closer that the eyes of the soul are shut to earthly things in this kind of sleep, the keener is its inward vision, which is enabled to see the beauty of heaven in loving contemplation. This sleep and this awakening are wrought by the light of grace in the soul of one who loves God.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:40, LPH pp.228–29

It is also, he says, more a matter of inner stillness than the search for purity, for purity will arise from the stillness. Quoting the *Psalms*, he writes:

“Be still, and see that I am God.”² That is: you who are reformed in feeling and whose inward vision is clear to see the things of the spirit, cease from outward activity for a while and see that I am God. . . .

A soul that has this inward vision of God is not greatly concerned with the struggle for virtue, and does not devote itself chiefly to this. Its whole purpose is to maintain such vision of God as it has. It desires to keep its mind on this, to ensure that its love never wavers, and as far as possible to set aside all else. When it does this, God subdues all sins in the soul, overshadows it with His blessed presence, and gives it all virtues. And the soul is so comforted and sustained by the wonderful feeling of love that derives from the vision of God that no outward tribulation can disturb it. In this way, divine Love destroys all sin in the soul, and reforms it with a new awareness of virtues.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:36, LPH pp.210–11

Aware of the possibility that they are simply being deceived by their own lively imagination and wishful thinking, many of the mystics have themselves subjected their experiences to much soul-searching scrutiny. Teresa of Ávila, who conscientiously categorized the types of vision she received, also points out that spiritual sight only develops when the soul withdraws from the senses:

It is as if the soul were rising from play, for it sees that worldly things are nothing but toys; so in due course it rises above them, like a person entering a strong castle, in order that it may have nothing more to fear from its enemies. It withdraws the senses from all outward things and spurns them so completely that, without its understanding how, its eyes close and it cannot see them and the soul’s spiritual sight becomes clear. Those who walk along this path almost invariably close their eyes when they say their prayers; this, for many reasons, is an admirable custom, since it means that they are making an effort not to look at things of the world. The effort has to be made only at the beginning; later it becomes unnecessary: eventually, in fact, it

would cost a greater effort to open the eyes during prayer than to close them. The soul seems to gather up its strength and to master itself at the expense of the body, which it leaves weakened and alone: in this way it becomes stronger for the fight against it.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 28, CWTA2 p.116

It is clear from the descriptions of experiences provided by mystics that such experiences are greatly coloured by the faith, beliefs, and temperament of the individual. A number of Christian mystics, for example, have had inner visions of the suffering of Jesus that are clearly more than simple imagination. Margery Kempe writes of herself:

Another time, as this creature lay in her contemplation in a chapel of our Lady, her mind was occupied in the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and she thought truly that she saw our Lord appear to her spiritual sight in his manhood, with his wounds bleeding as freshly as though he had been scourged before her.

Margery Kempe, Book of Margery Kempe 85, BMK p.248

Julian of Norwich similarly says of her several revelations concerning matters of the Christian faith:

All this was shown me in three ways, in actual vision, in imaginative understanding, and in spiritual sight. This last I cannot, and may not, disclose as openly and fully as I should like. But I trust that God Almighty will of His goodness and love enable you to savour its spirit and sweetness more than my feeble efforts permit.

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love 9, RDL p.76

It is a fact that things seen with spiritual sight have a sense of reality about them that convinces the one who experiences them. Yet that feeling and the nature of the experience cannot be conveyed to others. Nevertheless, questions remain concerning the complete authenticity of experiences that are clearly related to the individual's temperament and beliefs.

See also: **eyes of the soul, flight of the soul** (8.1), **image** (7.2), **visions** (8.1).

1. *Genesis* 3:1–24.
2. *Psalms* 46:10, *KJV*.

jāgat jyot(i), jāgat jot (H/Pu) *Lit.* awakened (*jāgat*) flame (*jyot*); living or lighted flame, living light, ever-radiant light; the inner, divine light; the omnipresent light of God:

The Lord has seated me on a throne:

The living light (*jāgat jot*)

is shining in all the four directions.

Gulāl Sāhib, Bānī, Bhed kā ang, Shabd 14, GSB p.38

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh *guru*, says that constant awareness of this inner light is what constitutes a pure disciple – a *khālas* (pure one):

He who meditates day and night on the ever-radiant light (*jāgat jot*),

giving no thought to anything else, . . .

when the perfect light (*pūran jot*) (of God)

shines (*jagai*) in his heart –

Then he may be considered an immaculate pure one (*khālas*).

Guru Gobind Singh, Dasam Granth, Sawaiyā 1; cf. DGS2 pp.858–59

See also: **jyotis**.

jhilmil (H) *Lit.* twinkling light, trembling flame; a light or flame that is unsteady due to a breeze or lack of fuel; a sparkling or dazzling light; mystically, the light seen within at the eye centre and in the higher realms.

Speaking of the light of the five *tattvas* in their subtle form, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh says:

I see the glory of the (inner) eye (*til*),

and flashes of the dazzling flame (*jhilmil*)

and blossoming flowers in five colours.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 3:2.22–24, SBP p.14

Yārī Sāhib uses the term more generally:

Day by day, my love increases,

lust and anger are burnt away.

The fire of separation has started burning.

Little by little, this pure fire is growing

and its dazzling light (*jhilmil*) glows brightly.

Yārī Sāhib, Ratnāvalī, Shabd 3:3, YSB p.1

And speaking of the light of the ‘sky’ (*gagan maṇḍal*) of *trikuṭī*, the causal plane, Tulsī Sāhib says:

In the midst of *gagan maṇḍal*

can be seen the dazzling light (*jhilmil nūr*).

Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 1, Kuṇḍalī 15:1, TSH1 p.37

jīnguāng (C) *Lit.* golden (*jīn*) light (*guāng*); a golden light or ray. According to Daoist masters, a golden light appears in advanced stages of spiritual practice, illuminating the consciousness of the practitioner.

Master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) says:

Soon the golden light (*jīnguāng*) appears, permeating the body.

Zhāng Bóduān, Wùzhēn piān, DZ141

When *yīn* and *yáng* (negative and positive, duality) are merged as one and the spirit is purified, the practitioner becomes attuned to the *Dào*. Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) says that at this point the inherent “golden light” of awareness is experienced within oneself:

All of a sudden,

bursting from the gate in the forehead (*dǐng'émén*),

radiant (*shuòshuò*) golden light (*jīnguāng*)

fills the spiritual chamber (*shénsì*). . .

A single ray of golden light (*jīnguāng*)

illuminates (*míng*) all four corners (*i.e.* everywhere).

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

To begin to experience the inner light, it is necessary to curtail the wildness of the mind and to purify it until it becomes the “mind of *Dào*”. Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, *fl.* C16th) says that when such cultivation of the mind is complete not only will the light appear, but that light will pervade one’s entire being:

The sages say:

The mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is humble (*wēi*)

and the human mind (*rénxīn*) is devious.

Few are pure and few have wisdom.

In the centre of compassion is the place of union.

Inside the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) is the *Yáochí*.

Lock up the monkey and the ape

so that they cannot run away;

Tame the wild horse,

so that it cannot get out of control.

Grasp the opening of the gate (*juézhōng*),

and when cultivation is complete,

a ray of golden light (*jīnguāng*) will penetrate your entire being.

Shuǐjīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (5) túzhù; cf. CSTM pp.31–32

Yáochí (‘jade lake’) is the mythical Jade Lake of Mount Kūnlún, the residence of Xī Wángmǔ (‘Queen Mother of the West’), keeper of the peaches

of immortality and an ancient high deity found in inscriptions on oracle bones as early as 1500 BCE. Here, the term is used metaphorically to refer to the origin or source of all things, the *Dào*. “Mysterious gate” refers to the ‘gateway’ between the physical and the spiritual, the outer and the inner. The “monkey”, “ape” and “wild horse” are images intended to evoke the unrestrained and erratic tendencies of the mind.

See also: **shénguāng**.

jñāna-chakshus, bodha-chakshus (S), **ñāṇa-cakkhu, ñāṇa-locana** (Pa), **gyān chakshu** (H) *Lit.* eye (*chakshus*) of knowledge (*jñāna*), the eye of wisdom (*bodha*); the inner eye, the eye of consciousness; the spiritual eye that sees the light and scenery of the inner realms, and which automatically infuses the soul with divine knowledge and wisdom.

This inner eye sees the divine presence in everything:

The eye of knowledge (*jñāna-chakshus*) sees the All-pervading that is existence, consciousness, and bliss. The eye of ignorance (*ajñāna-chakshus*) does not see the resplendent Sun (of *Brahman*), like a blind man (does not see the material sun). . . . To an ignorant man, the world of phenomena is filled with a flood of misery; to a wise man, it is full of bliss. To a blind man the world is dark; to men of clear vision it is bright.

Varāha Upanishad 2:18–23; cf. *YU* pp.404–5

The twice-born (the initiated), who see with the eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*), perceive Him as only One, pure through and through, all-pervading, comprising everything from *Brahman* to sticks.

Mantrikā Upanishad 16; cf. *SVUW* p.147

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛishṇa says that only a person with the “eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*)” can see the incarnated soul (*jīva*) experiencing life:

The *jīva*, identified with the *guṇas* (attributes of creation),
remains unrecognized by the deluded
whether dwelling in the body, experiencing existence,
or leaving the body.

But not so those with the eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*).

The striving *yogīs* perceive the soul (*ātman*) within themselves,
but not so the impure, the devotionless and the godless,
though they too may be striving.

Bhagavad Gītā 15:10–11

The *jñāna-chakshus* leads to realization of the Divine:

They who, by the eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*), ...
 attain freedom of the spirit from matter –
 They will reach the Supreme.¹

Bhagavad Gītā 13:34

Shankara (C9th) also says that the “eye of wisdom” permits the yogi to see everything in himself, and himself in everything. The “eye of wisdom” can see that the sublime Reality is “present everywhere”:

Through the eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*), the *yogī* of perfect realization sees the entire universe in his own self (*ātman*), seeing everything as the self (*ātman*) and nothing else. ...

Though the *Ātman* is reality (*sat*) and consciousness (*chit*), and is present everywhere, yet only the eye of wisdom (*jñāna-chakshus*) can perceive it. But he whose vision is obscured by ignorance does not see It, just as a blind man does not see the resplendent sun.

Shankara, Ātmabodha 47, 65; cf. *SKS* pp.204, 220–22

This is not a matter of belief or philosophy, but of personal experience and direct vision:

The true nature of things is to be experienced personally, through the eye of wisdom (*bodha-chakshus*), and not through a sage; precisely what the moon is, is to be known with one’s own eyes (*nija-chakshus*); can others make one know it? ...

That supreme *Brahman* which is beyond the range of all speech, but accessible to the eye of wisdom (*bodha-chakshus*); which is pure, the embodiment of knowledge, the beginningless entity – you are that *Brahman*, meditate on this in your mind. ...

Through *samādhi* (deep meditation), in which the mind has been made perfectly still, visualize the Truth of the self (*ātman*) with the eye of wisdom (*bodha-chakshus*) opened.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 54, 255, 473; cf. *VCSM* pp.20, 99, 176

Later Indian *sants* (saints) have written in similar terms. Ravidās (c.1414–1540) says that to acquire the “eye of wisdom” is a matter of divine grace, obtained through a *guru*:

When a blind man finds the *guru*,
 the disciple’s blindness is removed.
 Without the eye of wisdom (*gyān chakshu*) bestowed by the *guru*,
 how can the snare of delusion be destroyed?

Ravidās, Vāṇī, Sāshī-Bhāg 15, *SGRV* p.140

Jñāna-chakshus, together with its Pali counterparts *ñāṇa-cakkhu* and *ñāṇa-locana*, are also used in a general sense in Buddhism, where they again refer to the various forms of the inner eye or mystical vision. *Jñāna-chakshus* is contrasted with *māṃsa-chakshus* (eye of flesh) – the physical eye that sees only the material world. All degrees of spiritual vision are understood to be developed by meditation. According to a *Theravāda* Buddhist chant, drawn from the Pali canon:

The Buddha, well-purified, with ocean-like compassion,
possessed of the eye of knowledge (*ñāṇa-locana*)
completely purified,
destroyer of the evils and corruptions of the world –
That Buddha with devotion I revere.

Buddhist Chant in Salutation to the Triple Gem; cf. in CGDO

See also: **chakshus**, **divya-chakshus**, **pañcha-chakshus**, **tīsar nayan**.

1. *Cf. Bhagavad Gītā* 15:10.

jñāna-netra (S) *Lit.* eye (*netra*) of knowledge (*jñāna*); the inner eye, the eye of consciousness; the spiritual eye that sees the light and scenery of the inner realms, and which automatically infuses the soul with divine knowledge and wisdom.

In the *Shākta Upanishads*, the *jñāna-netra* is effectively the same as the eye focus, the centre or *ājñā chakra* that lies between the eyebrows:

The eyebrow (*bhrū*) *chakra* is of the size of the thumb. There, on the eye of knowledge (*jñāna-netra*), shaped like a tongue of flame, one should meditate.

Saubhāgya-lakshmī Upanishad 3:7; *cf. SUKW p.65*

Focusing at the eye of knowledge (*jñāna-netra*)
evoke the thought: “I am *Brahman*,
the great, pure, motionless, quiescent One.”

Tripurā-tāpinī Upanishad 5:23; *cf. SUKW p.33*

See also: **jñāna-chakshus**, **shiva-netra**.

jyotis (S), **jyot(i)**, **jot(i)** (H/Pu), **jotī** (Pu) *Lit.* light, flame, candle, lamp; hence, radiance, brightness; mystically, the divine, celestial ‘flame’ or inner light; common to probably all spiritual traditions; the light of God, the light of the soul; also, specifically, the light of *sahasra-dal kamal*, the thousand-petalled lotus, the powerhouse or energy source of the astral realm.

One of the most consistent features in descriptions of mystical experience is that of seeing light within. Some neurologists, psychologists, philosophers and others have tried to explain this away either as a hallucination or as a metaphorical way of describing a sense of intellectual illumination. But it is significant that those who have experienced inner light never explain it in this manner. However fleeting it may have been, they report that it conveys a sense of great reality, usually accompanied by a feeling of spiritual elation or bliss.

There are many sources in Indian traditions that speak of this light. The Jain philosopher Amṛitachandra (c.C10th–12th CE), addressing the “Lord of the *Jinas*, who is nothing else but the very essence of consciousness”,¹ writes of the divine light that emanates from the Divine:

The waving lamps of Your consciousness simultaneously
emit a clear, sparkling and powerful light (*jyotis*);
They are filled with glowing flames, and their rays are emanated
by the force of that vast power that manifests great energy
in bearing the burden of the three worlds.

Amṛitachandra, Laghu-tattva Sphoṭa 24:5 (580); cf. *ALTS* p.206

This inner light eliminates all passions:

May the meritorious ones completely cast out the passions,
which have been permitted continuous entry since beginningless time,
until there shines that light (*jyotis*) which cannot be removed.
O Lord! When that (light) shines forth,
all passions are totally and simultaneously ejected.

Amṛitachandra, Laghu-tattva Sphoṭa 22:24 (549); cf. *ALTS* p.192

Then the primal Light is experienced:

I perceive that primal, infinite Light (*Jyotis*),
which is attained through the *yoga* that blossoms
as a result of correct practice (*karma*) and gnosis (*jñāna*).
It is a reality wondrously constructed,
possessing positive and negative aspects.
It has ruthlessly and completely torn to pieces
the infinite darkness of delusion (*moha*).

Amṛitachandra, Laghu-tattva Sphoṭa 18:1 (426); cf. *ALTS* p.147

In the Hindu tradition, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Upanishads*, the nature of the divine Essence is light. Having observed that God is the “Lord of what has been and what will be”, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* continues, “Him the gods worship as the Light of lights (*jyotishām Jyotis*), as life immortal.”² Likewise, in the *Gītā* and other *Upanishads*:

The Light of lights (*jyotishām Jyotis*) is said to be beyond darkness.
He is knowledge itself – That which is to be known,
and the goal of knowledge, dwelling in the heart of everything.

Bhagavad Gītā 13:17

Within the innermost golden sheath dwells *Brahman* –
stainless, indivisible, pure, the Light of lights (*jyotishām Jyotis*),
known to knowers of the self (*ātman*).

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 2:2.9

The *Purusha*, the size of a thumb, dwells within the body,
like a flame (*jyotis*) without smoke.
He is the Lord of the past and the future.
He exists today and will exist tomorrow.
This, verily, is That.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:1.13

That Being (*Purusha*) is indeed the great Lord –
He who instigates all existence (*sattva*),
ruling guide to the purest attainment,
imperishable light (*jyotis*).

Shvetāshvatarā Upanishad 3:12

The spiritual seeker longs to experience that light – the light of the higher Reality, leading away from the death, illusion and spiritual darkness that pervades this world. Hence, the well-known refrain:

From the unreal (*asat*) lead me to the real (*sat*),
from darkness (*tamas*) lead me to light (*jyotis*),
from death (*mṛityu*) lead me to immortality (*amṛita*).

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 1:3.28

The true nature of the soul or self (*ātman*) is spiritual light. Thus Shankara speaks of both the self and *Brahman* as being “self-luminous (*svayaṃ jyotiḥ*)”.³ While many of the more ancient Vedic texts speak of fire or sun-worship in an outward sense, the *Upanishads* almost invariably suggest an interior or mystical meaning. Thus, again in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, Yājñavalkya asks King Janaka, by way of teaching him, what light lies beyond that of the sun by day and the moon and fire by night:

“When the sun has set, Yājñavalkya, and the moon has set, and the fire has gone out, and talking has ceased, what serves as light (*jyotis*) for a man?”

“The self (*ātman*), indeed, is his light (*jyotis*),” said he, “for with the self, indeed, as the light (*jyotis*), he sits, moves about, goes to work, and returns.”

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 4:3.6

Similarly in other *Upanishads*:

The light (*jyotis*) that shines above this heaven, above all, above everything, in the unsurpassed and highest worlds beyond which there are no higher, truly, that is the same light (*jyotis*) that is within a man (*purusha*).

Chhāndogya Upanishad 3:13.7

That blissful one who, rising up out of this body, enters the light beyond (*paraṃ jyotis*), appears in its own form. That is the self (*ātman*)... That is the immortal, the fearless. That is *Brahman*. Verily, the name of that *Brahman* is the Real (*Satya*).

Chhāndogya Upanishad 8:3.4

The self (*ātmā*) within the body, pure and made of light (*jyotis*),
may be won through unceasing truth,
meditation (*tapas*), right knowledge, and chastity.
The seekers (*yatis*) purified of imperfections behold Him.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 3:1.5

There are, assuredly, two aspects of *Brahman*: the formed and the formless. That which is formed is unreal (*asatya*); that which is formless is the real (*satya*); that is *Brahman*, that is light (*jyotis*).

Maitrī Upanishad 6:3

This light can be experienced by means of *yoga* and meditation:

With perfect concentration, the gaze fixed on the light (*jyotis*) a little above the eyebrows (*bhrū*), ... the mind is joined (to the *prāṇa*, life energy), and one soon attains the state of *unmanī* (transcendent mind).

Hat̥ha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:39; cf. HPSPD p.143

Awakening of the subtle senses
brings definite stability to the mind;
As, too, the peaceful light (*jyotis*) within. ...

By deep meditation (*saṃyama*) on the effulgent light (*jyotis*)
in the centre of the head,
liberated and perfected souls have direct vision.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:35–36, 3:33

Later Indian *sants* (saints) have reiterated the same truth. Addressing his master, Dādū writes:

What splendour is your radiance (*nūr*)!
 All is illumined by your glorious light (*joti*).
 O my dear one, you are my beloved.
 What is there to say of your lustre (*tej*)!
 Why should one not attain this purity?
 Dādū is a sacrifice to you, again and again;
 Come, O my beloved.

Dādū, Bānī 2, Shabd 413, DDB2 p.141, DCMU p.107

Other mystics have likewise spoken of both the light of the soul and the light of God:

The only great One, the eternal Light (*Jyotis*),
 beyond description, the supreme Soul;
 Ceaseless, without attributes, faultless,
 without restraint, incomparable, never lessening,
 ever united, without desire, ever active:
 He exists forever.

Te Dhanyāste Mahātmanah 5; cf. in SSI6 pp.74–75⁴

He has given me the light (*dīpak*) of His light (*jot*),
 and my house (*i.e.* body) is now full of moonlight.

Sahajobāī, Bānī, Chaupāī 8, SBB p.2

In the body exists the light (*joti*):
 that alone is the beautiful abode of happiness.

Dariyā Sāhib, Chune hue Shabd, Holī 6:1, DSC p.25

The light (*diyanā*) shines brightly
 in all the four directions:
 The light (*joti*) (of the soul)
 has merged into the light (*joti*) (of God).

Ravidās, Bānī 83, RJKB p.40

One who enshrines His lotus feet within the heart,
 meets the beloved Lord;
 The divine light (*jot*) is revealed to him.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 375, AGK

As water comes and gets blended with water,
so does his light (*jotī*) blend with the supreme Light (*Jot*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 278, MMS

As the ray blends with the sun, and water becomes water,
so merges the human light (*jotī*) in the supreme Light (*Jot*),
and becomes perfect.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 846, MMS

Mystics have also described the light that is first seen by the soul as it concentrates within. Any form of deep inner contemplation will lead to the experience of inner light. The twentieth-century mystic Maharaj Sawan Singh observes:

The *jyoti* will automatically come, whether you practise *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) or *Shabd yoga*.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Letter 10, SG p.16

He goes on to explain that the light that is seen initially may be that of the subtle elements or energies (*tattvas*) that make up the physical body and physical universe. This light then develops into a higher light, though on the inward ascent light alone has its limitations, for it comes from the divine creative Word or Sound (*Shabd*):

So far you go with the help of light. Beyond that you go with the help of *Shabd*. . . . You know that there is a *jyoti* of *tattvas*. This *jyoti*, then, of which you speak springs from *tattvas*. Well, I am glad that a man living a householder's life has achieved so much. . . . At the most, the *jyoti* will take you up to the top of *Brahm*; thence onward you travel up by means of *Shabd*. The lights which you see when you go up are the lights of the *tattvas*. The *jyoti* which springs from *Shabd* will be further up. *Tattvas* have their own light, but the real *jyoti* you will meet further on.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Letter 10, SG p.18

A number of Indian saints, specifically those who have taught the path of the divine Word, have maintained that although *Brahman* is the source of *māyā* (illusion), the soul can go higher. In this context, the light of the three worlds of the mind, which emanate from *Brahman*, is a source of illusion, though of a highly refined nature. *Brahman* is itself the creation of the supreme Being, *sat Purush* (true Being). In Indian mythological thinking, cosmic *māyā* is the primeval goddess, *Ādi Shakti* or *Ādi Māyā*, who creates the three deities, *Brahmā*, *Vishṇu* and *Shiva* (the creator, preserver, and destroyer), who are responsible for all change in the worlds below *Brahman*. Dariyā Sāhib speaks of this primal 'goddess' as *Jyoti*:

Three forms have emerged from *Jyoti*,
 known as *Brahmā*, *Vishṇu*, and *Shiva*.
 But the primal Being is *sat Purush*,
 whose message one must heed.

Dariyā Sāhib, Dariyā Sāgar, Sākhī 10, DG2 p.15; cf. DSSK p.100

This knowledge has been revealed to me,
 the entities known as souls are brides of *sat Purush*.
 This entire physical world is the manifestation of *Jyoti*:
sat Purush alone is pure. . . .
 Those souls that become free from impurity
 are united with that imperishable Lord.
 He never dies, is forever immortal;
Jyoti is not to be worshipped in His court.

Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī, Shabd 18:39, DG1 p.138; cf. DSSK pp.125–26

As the soul concentrates at the eye centre and leaves the body, the inner light first appears as flashes, like lightning, then as points of light, like stars in the black sky at night. Then, as concentration deepens, it stabilizes as a round glow, like the sun, finally appearing like the soothing light of the moon. These have been called the star (*tārā maṇḍala*), sun (*sūrya maṇḍala*, *sūryaloka*) and moon regions (*chandaloka*). Swami Shiv Dayal Singh describes this stage of the journey:

Rise up, and dwell in your eye (*nainan*, i.e. eye centre).
 Concentrate yourself at this point,
 and duality will be transcended.
 Then fix your sight (*dṛishti*) upon the light (*jot*).
 Give up the dark (*shyām*) side and choose the bright (*set*),
 focus your *surat* and listen intently to the Melody.

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:18.11–13,
 SBP p.152; cf. SBPS p.219*

After experiencing this initial light, the soul finds itself on the threshold of the astral realms. Further on, it will behold the great light or ‘flame’ of *sahasra-dal kamal* (thousand-petalled lotus), with its one central ‘flame’ and a thousand lesser lights around it.

This ‘flame’ has been called the *jyot* or *jyoti swarūp bhagwān* (god in the form of a flame). It is so alluring that it immediately captivates the mind of the devotee. Yogis and others may take it for the supreme Lord Himself, for all lower creation emanates from this powerhouse of light. But those who are in touch with the creative vibration of the divine Sound hear the attractive peals like a bell or gong emanating from the great ‘flame’, and are drawn through it to yet higher realms. In their writings, some *sants* have spoken more specifically of this light:

First comes the *jyoti* – the celestial flame – out of which emanates a divine Melody. Concentrate your attention on it and, focusing your subtle mind on the vision, penetrate it. Continue this practice every day, giving up love for the world and increasing it for *Nām* (Name, the divine Word).

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul, Discourses 5, SOSJ p.68

And:

I will give you the secret of the path,
A few hints concerning it.
First fix your mind and soul upon the point (*til*).
Gather together mind and soul, again and again,
and bring them inside.

Then behold a window,
and beyond that an open field (*chaukā*).
Concentrate the attention upon that and hold it there.
You will see a five-coloured flower garden, and inside of that,
behold the lighted lamps (*dīpdān*, light-offering) within.
Enjoy this scene for some days.

Then, see the blue-coloured sky
appearing like a *chakra* (circular disc).
Impelled by love and longing, pierce through it.
Then gaze at the light (*jot*) with detached mind.
Hear the unending bell sound and become absorbed in it.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:1.13–19, SBP p.226

As one sees the flash of lightning in the night,
see the divine light (*jot*) deep within your nucleus, day and night.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1041, AGK

Other *sants* have written more generally of the divine light:

I cannot tell night from day,
because I see the unquenchable flame (*jyoti*) at all times.

Tukārām, Vachanāmṛit, Abhang 163, TVR p.54

I saw the light (*prakāsh*) within:
it was the light of my own soul (*svayam ātmajyoti*).

Eknāth, Bhajane, Abhang 268, EBEP p.132

See also: **prakāsh**.

1. Amṛitachandra, *Laghu-tattva Sphoṭa* 24:1 (576); cf. *ALTS* p.204.
2. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 4:4.15–16; cf. *PU* p.277.
3. E.g. Shankara, *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* 211, 238, 380, 507, 535; cf. *VCSM* pp.82, 92, 144, 188, 199.
4. Unsourced in *SSI6*; attrib. Ṛishi Ved Vyāsa, i.e. probably one of Sanskrit classics.

kanj kamal, kanj kanwal (H) *Lit.* ambrosial (*kanj*) lotus (*kamal*); the centre between the two eyebrows, above and behind the eyes; also called the *ājñā chakra* (command centre) and the *do dal kanwal* (two-petalled lotus); the eye centre; the headquarters of the mind and soul in the human body.

The twentieth-century mystic Maharaj Sawan Singh compares the process of meditation that begins at this centre with that of *prāṇāyāma* and *haṭha yoga*, which begin with a descent into the lower centres, and then attempt to rise up from there:

Doing *simran* (repetition) with the tongue of the soul, doing *dhyān* (contemplation) with the eyes of the soul and listening to the *Shabd Dhun* (divine Sound or Melody) with the ears of the soul is the essence of all spiritual practice. These three modes of spiritual practice are performed by concentrating the attention at the eye centre, which is the headquarters of the soul, and is above and beyond the nine doors of the body. It is the easiest and fastest method, and can be practised by young and old alike.

The methods employed by other spiritual practitioners provide a stark contrast to *surat Shabd yoga* (union of the soul with the *Shabd*). For example, *yogīs* start with *shauch* for the cleansing of the body in their practice of *ashṭāṅg* (eight-step) *yoga*. Those who practise *haṭha yoga* cleanse with *netī*, *dhauti*, *vasti* and *gaja karaṇi*, followed by *pūraka*, *kumbhaka* and *rechaka* (inhaling, holding and exhaling the breath in *prāṇāyāma* exercises).

After performing the above exercises they do *jap*, the repetition of *mantras*, while concentrating their attention at the *mūlādhāra chakra* (perineal centre), which gives them certain supernatural powers. They go on invoking these powers by repeating the process at the *indri chakra* (reproductive centre), and then at the navel, heart and throat centres till they reach *kanj kamal* or *āgyā chakra*, the centre behind the eyes, where they catch the *anāhad Shabd*, and with its help merge in *sahans dal kamal* (thousand-petalled lotus). The five lower centres of the body derive their energy from *kanj kamal*, which is the seat of our consciousness during the waking state.

Saints disapprove of the above practices. Not only are they difficult and dangerous to perform, but they are also regressive because they

start at a point which is far below the eye centre, the natural seat of our attention, and are therefore wasteful of time and effort.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, My Submission, MSPC pp.119–20

In a poem describing these yogic practices, Kabīr also observes that the *kanj kamal* is the headquarters of the mind during its stay in the body:

Above that (the throat centre), O brother,
is the ambrosial lotus (*kanj kanwal*),
which has two petals – white and black;
Nij man (inner mind) reigns here,
and behind the eyes is its domain.

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 22:8, KSS1 p.65; cf. DSM p.200

Maharaj Sawan Singh explains the verse:

After the throat centre, we reach the sixth centre, which is between and behind the eyes. This is the seat of the soul and mind combined. . . . Now, our headquarters is here between the eyes. . . . By going in below this centre, the *yogī* does get some satisfaction. He also attains certain supernatural powers called *ṛiddhis* and *siddhis*. . . . The path of the saints starts from the eye centre. This path has been given to me by my own master. We have to go up, right up to *sach khaṇḍ* (true realm), and have to become one with *sat Nām* (true Name), the lord of the fifth region above this material world and physical universe.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Discourses on Sant Mat, DSM p.215

See also: **ājñā chakra** (5.1), **ashṭāṅga yoga** (8.5), **do-dala kamala, eye centre, haṭha yoga** (8.5), **tīsar nayan**.

key(s) of the kingdom (of heaven), key of knowledge Mystically, that which permits a soul to enter the heavenly realms, and ultimately to reach the kingdom of heaven; expressions attributed to Jesus, and variously interpreted.

The “keys of the kingdom” appears in *Matthew*, where Jesus appoints Peter to look after his flock:

I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven:
and whatever you will bind on earth
will be bound in heaven:
And whatever you loose on earth
will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19; cf. KJV

Here, the keys are that which unlocks the inner door, permitting the soul to enter the realms of the spirit. In this context, the keys are the binding of the soul by mystical baptism in the Holy Spirit. Once a soul has received such a baptism, it will be set free to travel in the heavenly realms.

The early Syrian writer, Joseph Ḥazzāya, understands continuous and focused prayer to be the means that can make use of this key and open the door to heaven:

There is no man who received a gift from God, and became worthy of divine revelations and visions, whether of this world or of the next, without continual prayer. It is in the hands of prayer that are placed the keys of the kingdom into which you wish to enter. . . .

Prayer is the key to the heavenly treasury, and . . . no mind enters before the awe-inspiring Majesty without continual prayer. I do not mean the prayer that emanates from distracted thoughts, but the one which emanates from the exertion of the body and from the pure thoughts of the soul.

Joseph Ḥazzāya, Letters 5, WS7 pp.181–82

In the *Clementine Homilies*, this “key of the kingdom” is also identified with knowledge (*gnōsis*), that is – revelation or mystic experience. Hence, Peter speaks of

the key of the kingdom, which is knowledge (*gnōsis*), which alone can open the gate of life, through which alone is the entrance to eternal life.

Clementine Homilies III:18, CH p.64

Peter is also alluding to another saying of Jesus, found in Luke:

Woe unto you, O lawyers!
For you have taken away the key of knowledge (*gnōsis*):
You yourselves have not entered in,
and those that were entering in you have hindered.

Luke 11:52; cf. KJV

The “lawyers” are the scribes, the interpreters of Jewish religious law. Jesus is saying that due to their incorrect interpretation of the sacred books, people are misled, and fail to find the true spiritual path. The “key of knowledge” – of real mystic experience by which the scriptures may be truly understood – is effectively taken away and replaced with an ineffective imitation that has no power to take a soul into the heavenly regions.

John of the Cross interprets those who “have taken away the key of knowledge” as inept spiritual directors who

show an undevout spirit, and are clad as it were, in very worldly garb, having little of the tenderness of Christ, since they neither enter themselves by the narrow gate of life, nor allow others to enter. . . . For these persons in truth are placed as barriers and obstacles at the gate of heaven. They hinder from entering those that ask counsel of them, yet they are aware that God has commanded them, not only to allow and help them to enter, but even to compel them to enter. . . . They, on the other hand, are compelling souls not to enter. Such are blind guides who can obstruct the life of the soul, which is the Holy Spirit. This comes to pass with spiritual directors in many more ways than have been mentioned here. Some do it knowingly, others unconsciously. But neither class shall remain unpunished, since, having assumed their office, they are under an obligation to know and consider what they do.

John of the Cross, Living Flame of Love 3:62, CWJC3 p.175

See also: **bound (in heaven) (7.4), door, gates.**

khaskhas kā dānā (H) *Lit.* poppy (*khaskhas*) seed (*dānā*); a term used by the nineteenth-century *sant* (saint) Tulsī Sāhib for the eye centre, the focus of mind and soul that lies between the eyebrows. Other mystics have described the eye centre as a sesame seed (*til*) or a mustard seed (*rāī*), all three seeds being tiny. *Til* also means ‘spot’ or ‘eye’, and the smallness of the poppy seed or a small spot signifies the intensity of concentration that is required at the inner centre if the soul and mind are to enter within.

Associating the *til* with the poppy seed, Tulsī Sāhib writes:

In the poppy seed (*khaskhas kā dānā*) is found the city of God.
Focus yourself at the *til*, for there you will find the path.

Tulsī Sāhib, Ratn Sāgar, Ghazal 1, RSTS p.162

Speaking again in metaphors, he refers to the inner realms as “mountains”. Concentrating the attention is like seeing distant places through a telescope – careful focus brings them into view; and the point of focus is the *til*, the *khaskhas kā dānā*:

Mountains are hidden behind the *til*:
with the lifting of the veil of the heart that hides them,
the path is revealed through the telescope (*durbīn*).
In the mirror (of one’s own being), there lies a hidden city.
Should you wish to find it,
you can do so by exploring the *til* within.

Therein lies a poppy seed (*khaskhas kā dānā*):
in the *til* can it be found.

Tulsī Sāhib, Ratn Sāgar, Rhektā, RSTS p.162

See also: **til**.

lama'āt (A/P) (sg. *lam'ah*) *Lit.* flashes, effulgences, sparkles, as of inner spiritual light; one of the initial experiences on the inward journey; also used by 'Irāqī as the title of a well-known Sufi text. Rūzbihān writes:

When lights from the Unseen appear, and you behold the brides of the angelic realm (*malakūt*), various forms of the realities of the Signs, the wonders of the Attributes, and sparkles (*lama'āt*) from the Essence, then you experience ecstasy.

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 5:2, MARB p.96; cf. in SSE11 p.118

See also: **barq**, **lawā'ih**, **lawāmi'**, **ṭawālī'**.

lawā'ih (A), **lavā'ih** (P) (sg. *lā'ih*) *Lit.* flashes, glimmerings, shimmerings; the manifestation of spiritual light within; one of the initial experiences on the inward journey; often described along with other early experiences on the inward journey such as *lawāmi'* (effulgence), *ṭawālī'* (illumination), and *lum'ah* (shimmer, gleam); generally regarded in Sufism as a state (*ḥāl*) rather than a station (*maqām*), since such experiences come involuntarily and are not permanent; used in the titles of a number of books by various Sufis, where the meaning is more like 'flashes of insight' or 'glimpses'. *Lawā'ih* are intended as encouragement to proceed higher:

Flashes (*lawā'ih*), when manifested to the inner consciousness, encourage the wayfarer to advance to sublime degrees.

Rūzbihān, Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyāt 395:1082, CPS p.558; cf. in SSE8 p.12

Flashes (*lawā'ih*) appear to the inner consciousness of mystics who experience a high spiritual level. They serve as steps to states higher than those they currently enjoy.

'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī, in Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA p.335; cf. in SSE8 p.12

The station of the vision of flashes (*lawā'ih*) in bewilderment occurs whenever God sees a mystic suffering profound bewilderment through having lost his attainment of ultimate union. In order that the mystic might regain his equilibrium, God reveals one of His flashes (*lawā'ih*)

whereby the mystic may view the paths of mysteries of the Unseen and perceive the stations of nearness to Him.

Al-‘Ārif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “The station (*maqām*) of flashes (*lawā’ih*) brings aid to those made sorrowful and anxious by the wine of bewilderment.”

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 16:39, *MARB* p.275; cf. in *SSE8* pp.13–14

A flash (*lā’ih*) is the dawning of the sun on our face.

Flashes (*lavā’ih*) rise in the East of our heart.

‘Alī Shāh Kirmānī, Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyah 186, *DMK* p.125; cf. in *SSE8* p.13

The meaning of Sufi terms is often interchanged by different writers. Thus, Rūzbihān reverses Al-Qushayrī’s description,¹ when he says that *lawā’ih*, by which both inner mysteries and knowledge of the physical world are revealed, is a more advanced stage than *lawāmi‘*:

Flashes (*lawā’ih*) are more complete than effulgence (*lawāmi‘*), for the latter represent the initial stage of revelation, while the former represent the full overwhelming by the illumination of the light of the moons of the divine Attributes. In order that intimacy with God be increased, and that the stages (*darjāt*) of the path be traversed in nearness and contemplative vision (*mushāhadah*), the light of the reality of attraction to the Attributes must shine into the inner being which is pure of the turbidity of creation. This light, however, does not last. It becomes concealed in the state of contraction (*fī al-qabḍ*) and revealed in that of expansion (*fī al-baṣṭ*). Through this process, God takes the lover to the stage of perfection and draws him into nearness of nearness to Himself. Through this, the lover sees the beauty of the realm of majesty, beholds the hidden mysteries of the angelic realm and the divine Acts, and perceives the secrets of hearts and mysteries of the Unseen.

Al-‘Ārif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “Flashes (*lawā’ih*) are the lights of divine manifestation by which the truths of sciences are revealed to the intelligence (*‘uqūl*).

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 5:46, *MARB* p.111; cf. in *SSE8* p.13

See also: **barq**, **lama‘āt**, **lawāmi‘**, **ṭawālī‘**.

1. Al-Qushayrī, *Tarjamah-ī Risālah*, *RQQQ* p.43.

lawāmi‘ (A), **lavāmi‘** (P) (sg. *lāmi‘*) *Lit.* effulgence, illumination, splendour; the manifestations of spiritual light within; one of the initial experiences on the inward journey; often described along with other early experiences on the inward

journey such as *lawā'ih* (flashes, glimmerings), *ṭawālī* (illumination) and *lum'ah* (shimmer, gleam); generally regarded in Sufism as a state (*ḥāl*) rather than a station (*maqām*), since such experiences come involuntarily and are not permanent; also, flashes of insight, intuition or illumination, usually unexpected, concerning spiritual matters; used in the title of a number of books by various Sufis ('Light on ...'). Most manuals of Sufism and Sufi terminology include the term:

Effulgence (*lawāmi'*) is the manifestation of light to the heart (*dil*), and the heart (*fawā'id*) benefits from its lasting effects.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXIV, KMM p.500; cf. KM p.385

Effulgence (*lawāmi'*) is that light of the Unseen which appears in the heart (*dil*) and illuminates the path of wisdom.

Rūzbihān, Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyāt 394:1081, CPS p.558, in SSE8 p.14

Effulgence (*lawāmi'*) is similar in meaning to flashes (*lawā'ih*) and resembles the radiance of lightning as it flashes in the clouds that bring the hope of rain to the thirsty one.

God displays a non-illusory illumination (*ishrāq*) of continuous lightning to the hearts of His friends who have the capacity to receive it because of their strength of heart, founded on their affirmation and belief in the Unseen. The effulgence (*lawāmi'*) that is thus manifested to the heart radiates so much light that it is impossible for purified souls to mistake it for an illusion, for if such a light were illusory, it would be readily extinguished.

'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī, in Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA p.336; cf. in SSE8 p.14

Qushayrī compares the meaning of a number of terms that possess a similar meaning:

The difference in meaning among these expressions is not great; they are all similar in meaning. They are experienced by beginners on the ascent of the heart (*qalb*), and for as long as the radiance of the sun of gnosis has not yet appeared to them. God, Most Worthy of Praise and Most High, provides constant sustenance to their hearts. As he said: "There (*i.e.* in the gardens of Eden, *jannātī 'Adnī*), morning and evening they have their sustenance."¹ Whenever the brightness of the beginners' hearts is darkened by the clouds of desire, the lightning of visionary revelations flashes within them, along with the effulgence (*lawāmi'*) of nearness. Those who are completely veiled must first await sudden glimmerings (*lawā'ih*) that take them by surprise. . . .

First come flashes (*lawā'ih*), then effulgence (*lawāmi'*), then illumination (*ṭawālī*). The flashes (*lawā'ih*) are like lightning, flashing and disappearing. . . . Effulgence (*lawāmi'*) is clearer than flashes

(*lawā'ih*), and it does not fade away so quickly, lasting two or three moments longer. . . . When it appears, it separates the wayfarer from himself and draws him into its light. But hardly has the light of its day disclosed itself before it is fallen upon by the hosts of the night. . . .

Illumination (*ṭawālī'*) lasts longer still and overpowers the wayfarer, completely dispelling darkness and eliminating doubt. However, it is easily dispersed, for it does not have great duration, and although it disappears gradually, the wayfarer fears its dispersal.

The effect of these – flashes (*lawā'ih*), effulgence (*lavāmi'*), and illumination (*ṭawālī'*) – differs. Some leave no trace, like a shooting star disappears into the enduring darkness of the night. Some, however, when their imprint fades, leave behind traces of pain. Yet once the light has faded, and the rapture subsides, the wayfarer finds himself bathed in the radiance of its blessings. Then he awaits that illumined state once more, living in the hope and expectation of its return, living with the memory of the experience he has received.

Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ pp.43–44; cf. in EIM pp.133–34, in SSE8 pp.16–17

The novice perceives effulgence (*lavāmi'*) as shooting stars, moon and sun, surrounded by a glowing light. If, in effulgence (*lavāmi'*), the lights are wrathful and threatening, they are of a red colour, and if the lights are of grace and promise, they are of a green colour:

When pure wine is poured into the goblet,
it reflects the colour of that goblet.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.51, in SSE8 p.14

See also: **barq**, **lawā'ih**, **lum'ah**, **ṭawālī'**.

1. *Qur'ān* 19:62.

light, light of life, light of men, radiance In this world, light is the illumination that makes sight possible. Mystically, it refers to the inherent light of the soul, the light of the higher regions of the mind and soul, and ultimately to the light of God. God is also referred to as 'the Light'; and the term also has general usage in expressions such as "so-and-so has seen the light", meaning that he has come to understand something at a human level that is usually regarded as being for the better. The light of human understanding is a reflection of the higher mystic understanding or knowledge. In a spiritual context, 'light' therefore has both actual and metaphorical meanings.

The perception of inner light is one of the most universal aspects of mystic experience. The early Greek mystic, Heraclitus, is speaking of the experience of light in deep meditation when he writes:

A man kindles a light (*phaos*) in the night,
 when his (external) vision is extinguished.
 Alive, he touches the dead;
 Awake, he touches the sleeping.

Heraclitus, Fragment 65 (26)

When a person closes his outer eyes and finds the inner light in meditation, he touches the after-death state, and is truly alive. But when a person is awake to this world, he is spiritually asleep.

Plato describes the culmination of spiritual practice under the close guidance of and association with a spiritual teacher as a sudden vision of light or enlightenment. Writing of mystical experience, he says:

It does not admit of verbal expression like other branches of learning.
 It arises as a result of a life lived with a continued application to the subject itself that a light (*phōs*) is suddenly kindled in a soul by a flame that leaps to it from another; and once lit it sustains itself thereafter.

Plato, Letters VII:341c–d; cf. PTCC pp.530–31

Of this light, the third-century Neoplatonist, Plotinus, writes:

When the spirit perceives this divine light (*phōs*), it knows not whence it comes, from without or within. When it has ceased to shine, we believe at one moment that it comes from within and at another that it does not. But it is useless to ask whence it comes; there is no question of place here. It neither approaches us nor withdraws itself; it either manifests itself or remains hidden. We must not then seek it, but quietly wait for its appearance, and prepare ourselves to contemplate it, as the eye watches for the sun rising above the horizon, or out of the sea.

Plotinus, Enneads 5:5.7–8, in PPI2 p.153

The inner light is an aspect of the divine Word, the creative emanation of the Divine by which all things come into being. According to John's gospel, which portrays Jesus as an incarnation of this Word, Jesus describes himself as the "light of the world", and in a position to give the "light of (eternal) life" to those who "walk in darkness" – in this world:

I am the light of the world (*phōs tou kosmou*):
 he that follows me shall not walk in darkness,
 but shall have the light of life (*phōs tēs zoēs*).

John 8:12; cf. KJV

In another place, Jesus also points out that those who live in the darkness of their sins see no light within themselves and are actually afraid of the light

or anything to do with it, because their deeply buried conscience tells them intuitively that there is much for which they will have to account:

Everyone who does evil hates the light (*phōs*),
nor does he come to the light (*phōs*),
lest his deeds should be exposed.

John 3:20; cf. KJV

Among the best-known gospel passages concerning the light is the prologue to John's gospel, where the Word is said to be the "life" and "light" within everybody, although human beings – to whom inner darkness is regarded as normal – do not understand it:

In it was life, and the life was the light of men.
And the light (*phōs*) shines in darkness,
and the darkness comprehends it not. . . .
That was the true light (*phōs*),
which lights (*phōtizei*) every man who comes into the world.

John 1:4–5, 9; cf. KJV

In *Matthew*, Jesus also adds:

The light (*lychnos*) of the body is the eye:
if therefore your eye is single,
your whole body will be full of light (*phōteinos*).
But if your eye is evil,
your whole body will be full of darkness.
If therefore the light (*phōs*) that is in you is darkness,
how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:22–23; cf. KJV

He means that only when the attention is one-pointedly focused within can the inner light be experienced. When that happens, the entire body feels as if it has been lit up from within; though observed from without, no one would ever know what is happening. On the other hand, if the mind is impure, the soul dwells in inner darkness, because the attention is scattered outside and cannot see its own innate light.

Paradoxically, to realize the light within, the soul must first focus itself entirely in the inner darkness. When it does so, it realizes that in fact, the darkness is not darkness, but is light; it is itself that very light:

It is in the depths of this darkness, in which the loving spirit has died to itself, that the revelation of God and the eternal life begins. For in this darkness, there shines and there is born an incomprehensible light,

which is the Son of God (the Word) in whom we contemplate eternal life. And in this light we see.

And this divine light is given in the simple being of the spirit, where the spirit receives the clarity which is God Himself. . . . This clarity is so great that the loving contemplative sees and feels in his depths where he rests, nothing except an incomprehensible light. And in accordance with the nature of this pure nakedness (of being), which embraces all things, he finds himself and feels himself to be that very light by which he sees, and nothing else.

Jan van Ruysbroek, Spiritual Espousals 3:3; cf. SER p.182

Many mystics and devoted souls have experienced the inner light, briefly or for more sustained periods of time, although as Abba Philēmon writes, the nature of the inner light is beyond expression:

The radiance of divine beauty is wholly inexpressible: words cannot describe it, nor the ear grasp it. To compare the true light (*phōs*) to the rays of the morning star or the brightness of the moon or the light (*phōs*) of the sun is to fail totally to do justice to its glory and is as inadequate as comparing a pitch-black moonless night to the clearest of noons.

Discourse on Abba Philēmon, Philokalia, PCT2 p.356

Nevertheless, some mystics have tried to convey something of their experiences. Spanish mystic, Luis de la Puente, says that in his case, it appears like “a light after the manner of a lightning flash”,¹ coming suddenly, at all sorts of times, often when he is least prepared for it, “revealing much in an instant, and without any reasoning convinces me completely of the truth of that which it reveals”. At the same time, “It enkindles the will with love of this truth, and, though its power lasts but a moment, there persists in the understanding a residue of it, and a readiness for new reasonings and meditations, which hold it, for an entire day, and even for days together, as though it were in suspension.”²

That the source of knowledge and understanding that comes with this light transcends normal reasoning is also clear from an experience credited to Italian Barnabite monk, Francesco Saverio Bianchi (1743–1815), and related by his biographer:³

One day when Pater Magno, a doctor, *littérateur*, and distinguished philosopher, was delivering . . . an enthusiastic eulogy of these sciences to which he was devoted, Francis, in order to make him appreciate the higher value of the sciences of God, replied: “I also, in my youth, ardently pursued these subjects of knowledge, and I even prayed to God to help me to attain them in order that I might be more useful to

my congregation. After this prayer, I once found myself inundated with a vivid light; it seemed to me that a veil was lifted up from before my eyes of the spirit, and all the truths of human science, even those that I had not studied, became manifest to me by an infused knowledge. This state of intuition lasted for about twenty-four hours, and then, as if the veil had fallen again, I found myself as ignorant as before. At the same time an interior voice said to me: 'Such is human knowledge; of what use is it? It is I, it is My love that must be studied.'"

Life of Francis Xavier Bianchi IV (Baravelli), in GIP p.279

A similar experience is related of St Ignatius Loyola (c. 1491–1556), founder of the Jesuits:

He once went from Manresa to a little church distant from thence a quarter of a league, to pray; and while he was going, he was suddenly transported and elevated in spirit: wherefore he sat himself down by the river side. And as he cast the eyes of his body upon the water, those of his soul were suddenly filled with a new and extraordinary light. For, in one moment, seeing no sensory image or object, he perceived wonderful things in a spiritual and sublime manner. By this light, certain things pertaining to the mysteries of the faith, together with other truths of natural science, were revealed to him, and this so abundantly and so clearly, that he himself said that if all the spiritual light which his spirit had received from God up to the time when he was more than sixty-two years old, could be collected into one, it seemed to him that all of this knowledge would not equal what was at that moment conveyed to his soul. This vision lasted for a long while.

Life of St Ignatius Loyola I:VII (Ribadeneira); cf. GIP p.279, LSFY p.92

There are many descriptions of this nature in the mystic literature of the world. That such knowledge arises from an inward expansion of consciousness is illustrated by an experience recorded by Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great, c.540–604) of the Italian, St Benedict of Nursia (c.480–550), where it is described as an enlargement of the "inward soul":

The man of God, Benedict, being diligent in watching, rose up early, before the time of matins (his monks being yet at rest) and came to the window of his chamber, where he offered up his prayers to almighty God. Standing there, all on a sudden, in the dead of night, as he looked forth, he saw a light which banished away the darkness of the night and glittered with such brightness that the light which shone in the midst of darkness was far more clear than the light of day. Upon this sight a marvellous strange thing followed, for as he himself afterwards reported, the whole world, gathered as it were under one beam of the

sun, was presented before his eyes. . . . For by means of that supernatural light, the capacity of the inward soul is enlarged. . . . But albeit the world was gathered together before his eyes, yet were not the heaven and earth drawn into any lesser room than they be of themselves, but the soul of the beholder was more enlarged.

Gregory the Great, Dialogues 2:35; cf. DSGG pp.112–14

Despite the undoubted sincerity and sense of authenticity with which mystics speak, the sceptical mind will still harbour doubts, or think that it is all a matter of an overheated imagination. Teresa of Ávila is aware of this when she writes that her experiences are far beyond anything she could have dreamt up in her wildest imagination:

If I were to spend years and years imagining how to invent anything so beautiful, I could not do it, and I do not even know how I should try, for, even in its whiteness and radiance alone, it exceeds all that we can imagine.

It is not a radiance that dazzles, but a soft whiteness and an infused radiance which, without wearying the eyes, causes them the greatest delight; nor are they wearied by the brightness that they see in seeing this divine beauty. So different from any earthly light is the brightness and light now revealed to the eyes that, by comparison with it, the brightness of our sun seems quite dim and we should never want to open our eyes again for the purpose of seeing it. It is as if we were to look at a very clear stream, in a bed of crystal, reflecting the sun's rays, and then to see a very muddy stream, in an earthly bed and overshadowed by clouds. Not that the sun, or any other such light, enters into the vision: on the contrary, it is like a natural light and all other kinds of light seem artificial. It is a light that never gives place to night, and, being always light, is disturbed by nothing. It is of such a kind, indeed, that no one, however powerful his intellect, could in the whole course of his life, imagine it as it is. And so quickly does God reveal it to us that, even if we needed to open our eyes in order to see it, there would not be time for us to do so. But it is all the same whether they are open or closed: if the Lord is pleased for us to see it, we shall do so even against our will. There is nothing powerful enough to divert our attention from it, and we can neither resist it nor attain to it by any diligence or care of our own. This I have conclusively proved by experience.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 28; cf. CWTAl p.180

The divine light, says Archimandrite Sophrony (1896–1993), is the essence of spiritual vision:

Contemplation of divine light is unfettered by circumstance: dark of night and light of day are equally propitious. Sometimes the light comes to man in such fashion that he remains conscious both of his body and of the world around him. He can then stay open-eyed, and simultaneously behold two lights, the physical and the divine. . . . This does not mean, however, that the beholding of light is analogous to the psycho-physiological process of natural vision, for divine light is of a different nature. It is the light of the mind, the light of the spirit, the light of love.

Physical light is the image of divine light in the natural world. We can only see the objects around us when there is light, and the eye discerns them badly if the light is poor, better if there is more light, and, finally, in the full light of the sun our vision reaches a certain completeness. Likewise, in the spiritual world no real vision is possible without divine light. Divine light is constant in itself, but man's receptivity varies.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.109

When the inner vision first perceives this spiritual light, the soul is uplifted and expanded beyond anything it has previously experienced:

When this prayer for the first time progresses into a vision of divine light, what man then contemplates and lives is so novel and unprecedented that he can find no interpretation for it. He feels that the confines of his being have been inexpressibly widened, that the light has translated him from death to life; but the magnitude of the experience leaves him wondering and bewildered. It is only after repeated visitations that he appreciates the divine gift he has received. At the time of the vision and after, the soul is filled with deep peace and the sweetness of the love of God. She aspires to nothing, neither to glory nor wealth, nor any other earthly happiness, nor even to life itself. All these things seem to her of no account: her entire impulse is towards the living boundlessness of Christ in whom there is neither beginning nor end, neither darkness nor death.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.110

The experience of being inwardly inundated with light is a universal human experience. Twentieth-century Californian mystic, Nancy Mayorga, disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, relates her experiences in a diary:

Night before last I sat in bed to meditate before going to sleep. I felt a strength in me that I felt on and off in recent weeks, a feeling of power and assurance that is quite new. I spoke within me the name of God and I held my attention firmly, strongly, in that sea of light

in the centre of the forehead. I resisted with determined strength the terrible pull to relax the attention, holding and holding to the name of God, gazing and gazing at that dark yet luminous cloud above. And then there came a point at which something else took over, something strong and ruthless and not myself. Everything was brilliant intensity and unspeakable bliss. My head began to whirl, but instead of being whirled into this brilliance as I would have liked, I was whirled out and back to my little self, and I could not get back there, and I have not been back there since. . . .

Steadfastness, persistence, stubbornness really count in spiritual practice. I have been holding on, clinging to my foothold for the past few weeks. This morning I almost didn't go to the temple. But the insistence of the *Gītā* on steadfastness kept intruding into my thought and I took that as a sign and went. Almost immediately, that strength which is not my own took hold of me. I was not gazing upon that sea of light. I was, with the greatest ease, immersed in it. Light and bliss, ah my God! for an hour and a half, which seemed like five seconds. . . .

No obvious progress. But still that sea of light is always immediately available, and at times the name of God is a wave of bliss in that sea that washes over me again and again. I could sit all day immersed in that bliss. Time actually ceases to be. I don't know how I can wish, how I can dare to wish for anything more. But I do so. I am sometimes sick with the desire for That. All that joy, and yet all this yearning!

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM pp.80–82

Sometimes, a person may not truly appreciate the nature of their experience. As the twentieth-century Indian mystic Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh writes to a disciple:

The experience you had . . . – brilliant white light surrounded by twinkling lights – was real and correct and was due to your attention being subconsciously at the eye centre. It was perfectly natural for the attention to be riveted on the central white light as also the suction. The nearer you draw to this light, the greater will be the suction, for you have to pierce and cross it. You did miss something there, for you should not have battled against this suction. You should have remained relaxed and allowed yourself to be drawn up, mentally repeating the names all the while. Love and faith are the keynotes.

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul, Letter 93, SOSJ p.184

See also: **eyes of the soul, visions** (8.1).

1. Luis de la Puente, *Memorial*, in *OEPR* p.37, in *SSM2* p.265.
2. Luis de la Puente, *Memorial*, in *OEPR* p.39, in *SSM2* p.265.

3. Also known as Francis Xavier Bianchi, not to be confused with Francis Xavier (1506–1552), a founding member of the Jesuits.

língguāng (C) *Lit.* spiritual (*líng*) light (*guāng*); in Daoism, spiritual purity or illumination attained by spiritual practice; equated with the elixir of immortality (*jīndān*).

In his *Wùzhēn piān* ('Treatise on Awakening to Reality'), master Zhāng Bódūān (C11th) says that the first staging post in spiritual practice is the transition point or centre between the material and spiritual realms. When one's inner being rediscovers its essential nature at this centre, then "the glow of spiritual light (*língguāng*) never leaves."¹ In *Dispelling Doubts on Symbolic Language*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains that *língguāng* is one of several expressions that refer to one's essential spiritual nature that becomes apparent during meditation:

When the spirit is empty, then true consciousness (*zhēnlíng*) is always present and never veiled. True essence (*zhēnjīng*), spiritual light (*língguāng*) and the valley spirit (*gǔshén*) are all metaphors for the same one true consciousness (*zhēnlíng*).

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

In a commentary on Zhāng Bódūān's *Wùzhēn piān*, Liú Yīmíng explains that although this spiritual light is always present within human beings, only a few have realized it while the majority have not:

A ray (*kē*) of spiritual light (*língguāng*) is never separate (it only seems to be separate from its source). When (one realizes that) the spiritual light (*língguāng*) is never separate, that is the immortal valley spirit (*gǔshén*). This is what the author (of *Wùzhēn piān*) is referring to when he says, "When you have swallowed a drop (*lì*) of the gold elixir (*jīndān*), then you will know that your life (inner being) does not depend on (your outer) destiny." The valley spirit (*gǔshén*), the true essence (*zhēnjīng*), and the spiritual light (*língguāng*) are one and the same. The only difference is whether or not they are developed. Students should know that these are not three different things.

Liú Yīmíng, *Wùzhēn zhízhī*, ZW253, DS17

He says that while the mind may be active or passive according to whether or not it is engaged in something, the spiritual light (*língguāng*) exists eternally, regardless of whether or not its presence has been realized:

(Activity of) the human mind (*rénxīn*) rises and falls depending on the presence or absence of things. The spiritual light (*língguāng*) of

the true mind (*zhēnxīn*) is constantly luminous, and remains the same whether things are present or absent. It is everywhere, whether apparent or concealed. It neither rises nor falls, and cannot be measured by the human mind (*rénxīn*) that distinguishes and discriminates. Using that which distinguishes and discriminates to understand the true mind (*zhēnxīn*) is like taking in a thief as your child; it is an upside-down view and a great mistake.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

An eighteenth-century hermit, known by his Daoist name Yǎngzhēnzǐ (‘Master who Cultivates Reality’), speaks of the vast potential of this birthless and deathless inner spiritual light, which neither grows nor diminishes, yet waits to be discovered, having been concealed for so long:

The original nature (*běnxìng*) of the spiritual light (*língguāng*) is that it is neither created nor extinguished, neither does it increase nor decrease. Even though it has been imprisoned and concealed for a long time, one glimmer of the spiritual light (*língguāng*) can extinguish a thousand ills and generate ten thousand virtues.

When the spiritual light (*língguāng*) is kept constant, how are you different from the sages (*shèngrén*)?

Q. “How does one keep the spiritual light (*língguāng*) constant?”

A. “With reverence. Only with reverence can the spiritual light (*língguāng*) be kept constant.” Being disciplined, vigilant and fearful is indeed reverence. Being attentive and hardworking (in spiritual practice) is also reverence.

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) advises practitioners to remain silent concerning personal mystical experience and the development of spiritual wisdom, and to nurture their inner understanding in order to avoid losing the “spiritual light (*língguāng*)” that has manifested within:

Wisdom is a function of the mind. Too much use of it consumes the mind. When you first attain a little wisdom, you are delighted and become eloquent. But then the spiritual energy (*shénqì*) flows and escapes, leaving no spiritual light (*língguāng*) to embellish the self. This ultimately leads to its loss. . . . Therefore, great people (*dàrén*) conceal their radiance (*guāng*) and store their brilliance in order to complete themselves. By focusing the spirit (*shén*) and completing the energy (*qì*), they learn the *Dào* and practise no-mind. When the spirit is merged with the *Dào*, it is called attaining the *Dào*.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

In Daoist terminology, to ‘complete oneself’ is to perfect oneself or to make oneself whole. To ‘complete’ the *qì* is to gather it from its scattered state throughout the body and to refocus it at its centre in the heart.

See also: **gǔshén**.

1. Zhāng Bóduān, *Wùzhēn piān*, DZI41.

lochan(a) (S/H) *Lit.* illuminating; eye; spiritually, the inner eye, inner vision; also used in terms such as *trilochana* (three-eyed), an epithet of *Shiva*.

Speaking of the “inner eye (*nayan*)” and the “eye of discernment (*bibek bilochan*)”, Tulsīdās says that it is only with the *guru*’s grace that the disciple meets the inner, spiritual form of the *guru*, which purifies and opens the inner eye:

The dust of the *guru*’s feet is a soft and lovely collyrium, which, like ambrosia to the inner eye (*nayan*), removes every defect of vision. Having thereby purified my eye of discernment (*bibek bilochan*), I proceed to relate the divine story of *Rām* that secures freedom from worldly bondage.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:1.1, RCML pp.4–5

One in whose heart this radiant form appears is indeed highly blessed. With its appearance, the bright eyes (*bimal bilochan*) of the mind (*hī*, heart) open, and the evils and sufferings of the night of mundane existence disappear.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:5.3–4, RCML pp.3–4

Dariyā Sāhib also says that the opening of such vision is a matter of divine grace:

Wondrous is the Creator, who has designed this body:
the human form is the top of all.
You are the beautiful mirror, O brother:
the Lord reveals His form within you. . . .
See the path with the eye of the heart (*urlochan*) –
the Lord reveals Himself within you.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Gyān svrodye, Chaupāī 305,
Sākhī 3, DG2 pp.271, 250, DSSK p.158*

See also: **chakshus**.

lua ‘uhane (Hw) *Lit.* pit (*lua*) + spirit (‘*uhane*); spiritual pit; a ‘place’ between the two eyes through which the spiritual realms may be accessed; also, the inner corner of each eye.

In ancient Hawaii, a *lua* was a toilet pit, and in modern Hawaii *lua* simply means ‘toilet’. But as with many Hawaiian words, the meaning changes depending on the context and pronunciation. In the case of *lua ‘uhane*, *lua* means more than just a physical pit. It is like a deep ‘well’ between the two eyes where a *kahuna* (shaman) finds solace and power (*mana*). A *kahuna* would concentrate at this point in order to find the light inside his head, so that in that light he could communicate with the spirit world. *Lua ‘uhane* was also a name for the haven of the spirit where one could enter and speak with ‘*aumākua* (spirit guides).

Some sources maintain that *lua ‘uhane* refers to the inner corners or to the tear ducts in the corner of each eye, through which the spirit (‘*uhane*) exits and re-enters the body. It is said that at night the spirit may leave the body through the *lua ‘uhane*, and that its adventures in the spirit world are what cause dreams (*moe ‘uhane*). Lest the spirit should get into difficulties while separated from the body, the *kahuna* places a wreath on the head of a person whose spirit leaves the body in this way:

Hawaiians believed that while the body slept, the ‘*uhane*, one’s personal, immortal spirit or soul, wandered. Leaving through the *lua ‘uhane* or ‘spirit pit’ – the tear duct at the inner corner of the eye – the spirit went travelling, seeing persons and places, encountering other spirits, experiencing adventures, and, most important, passing on messages from the ancestor gods, the ‘*aumākua*. Tired of wandering, the ‘*uhane* re-entered the body through the same *lua ‘uhane* and the dreamer awoke.

A Hawaiian of earlier days often began an account of a dream with,
 “‘*Ike akua nei ku‘u* (My spirit saw, . . . my spirit visited).”

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.170

Ancient *kāhuna* taught that negative energy was centralized below the navel and is especially connected to the sexual organs, while positive energy is located in the head at this haven of the spirit between the two eyes, the *lua ‘uhane*. *Kāhuna* believed that when the mind was emptied of all thoughts and emotions during the stillness of meditation, the head would fill with light.

David “Daddy” Bray (1889–1968), a practising *kahuna* (shaman), held classes in Hawaii in which he taught a method of meditation by which this centre could be accessed:

There are three steps to right meditation.

1. Relax the body, mind, and emotions. The body must be able to let go of all tension and be free from any pain that might interfere with the freedom of the mind. Also the mind must be relaxed so

that it can be open to psychic impressions. If the mind is tense then it cannot focus on the next two steps. As important, if not perhaps more important, than relaxation of the body and mind is the relaxation of the emotions. The *kahuna* must not work if he is filled with the negative emotions. . . . If he is envious, hateful or emotionally disturbed, then the mind cannot become free and clear. He will also attract negative spirits of the lowest kind, who will serve him only to trap him later. Relaxation of body, mind, and emotions is the first step.

2. Empty the mind completely. All images, thoughts, and elements of the imagination must be discarded. When the mind is empty, then it will seem that the head is filled with light. This is the *kukui* (light) or psychic energy. *Kāhuna* believe that the psychic light enters from the back of the head or *hono* (neck) and fills the inner cavern or haven of the spirit between the eyes (*lua 'uhane*). Unless the mind is completely emptied, the light cannot flow in. There will be obstacles and distortions to the meditation.
3. Focus the consciousness on the purpose of the meditation. If it is a problem, focus the mind on the problem as if God and the spirits who watch over the welfare of man were solving it. Feel that the problem is already solved, and be receptive to the solution. If you are working for someone, see that person in the haven of the spirit or *lua 'uhane*. If you are looking at the person with your physical eyes, close them or just let the eyes be partially open. See the person in your mind's eye, in the light that flows into you. If the person has a problem such as physical or emotional disease, see the person as perfect. Feel that God is making the person perfect and ask that you be used as an instrument to help that person.

Each of these steps is important for a successful meditation. In order to make the meditation valuable, use the prayers and affirmations that are most meaningful to you. The *kahuna* uses everything that helps him. Also be open to receive inspirations that will lead you to more success.

If there is trouble from outside disturbances or the imagination, it is because the first two steps have not been mastered. Practice makes perfect. Often long periods of time are required before results occur. Different people develop at different rates. Sometimes the person who is slow in developing, however, goes farther than the person who has sudden success without a solid foundation. Go slowly and do not try to force psychic sight.

Daddy Bray, Kahuna Class Notes, KCN p.3

See also: **kahuna** (7.1).

lum'ah, lama'an, lam' (A/P) (pl. *luma'*, *limā'*, P. *lum'at*) *Lit.* shimmer, gleam, flash; the manifestation of spiritual light within, as in the expression *lama'an wa-barq* (flashes and lightning); one of the initial experiences on the inward journey; often described along with other early experiences on the inward journey such as *lawā'iḥ* (flashes, glimmerings), *tawālī'* (rays, risings), and *lawāmi'* (effulgence); generally regarded in Sufism as a state (*hāl*) rather than a station (*maqām*), since such experiences come involuntarily and are not permanent.

See also: **barq, lawāmi'**.

maṃsa-cakkhu (Pa), **māṃsa-chakshus** (S) *Lit.* eye of flesh; physical eye, whose range is limited; in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, the vision of a particular being – human, animal, or celestial; a restricted vision, the extent of the restriction being particular to each kind of being. Certain birds, for instance, have ultra-keen long-distance vision, while *devas* (deities) are said to be able to see all things. See **pañcha-chakshus**.

míng (C) *Lit.* light; clear, distinct, bright, brilliant; also, to understand, to know; spiritually, being luminous, emitting light – especially self-generated light; spiritual light, spiritual enlightenment, wisdom.

When union with *Dào* is attained, the adept realizes his true spiritual nature, and in that enlightenment (*míng*) becomes aware of the “eternal”:

To return to the Root means stillness (*jìng*) –
 it is called returning to one's (true spiritual) life (*mìng*).
 Returning to one's (true spiritual) life
 is to find the eternal (*cháng*).
 To know the eternal is enlightenment (*míng*).
 Not to know the eternal is to court disaster.

Dàodé jīng 16

Some Daoists believe that an adept can recognize an individual's level of spiritual consciousness by observing the light on his face. Good morals, virtues and spiritual growth will be reflected in this light.¹ Although enlightenment is not something that should be revealed, it is inevitable that it will be perceived by others who have some degree of spiritual awareness. As the *Dàodé jīng* says:

The sage embraces the One (*bàoyī*),
 and becomes an exemplar for all under heaven.
 He does not reveal himself,
 and is therefore luminous (*míng*).

Dàodé jīng 22; cf. WLT p.134

Míng here carries also the broader meanings of ‘clear’ and ‘clear-sighted’, implying wise and discerning.

Later in the text, the *Dàodé jīng* echoes its earlier descriptions of the virtues of the sage, when warning against pride and ostentation:

He who stands on tiptoe does not stand (firm);
 He who strains his strides does not walk (well);
 He who reveals himself is not luminous (*míng*);
 He who justifies himself is not far-famed;
 He who boasts of himself is not given credit;
 He who prides himself is not chief among men.
 These, in the eyes of *Dào*,
 are called ‘the dregs and tumours of virtue (*dé*)’,
 which are things of disgust.
 Therefore, the man of *Dào* spurns them.

Dàodé jīng 24, WLT p.141

In fact, the *Dàodé jīng* also says that true radiance or enlightenment (*míng*) “appears to be dark”, meaning that it remains hidden from ordinary view:

There is the established saying:
 “The *Dào* which is bright (*míng*)
 appears to be dark (*mèi*).”

Dàodé jīng 41, SBCP p.160

The *Zhuāngzǐ* (C3rd BCE) uses *míng* to describe the inherent wisdom of one’s intrinsic spiritual nature. Human beings may feel that they have the wisdom to decide what is right and wrong – but there is no better way to make decisions than to be guided by one’s inherent spiritual nature, because it never judges or discriminates negatively:

There is no better way than to use the light (*míng*) (of one’s spiritual nature).

Zhuāngzǐ 2; cf. SBCP p.182

This is because the subjective vision of an unenlightened person relies on calculation and judgment, while the way of the sage is to be attuned to the spiritual principle of the *Dào*:

All subjects may be looked at from different viewpoints, from that and from this. If I look at a thing from another’s point of view, I do not see it; only as I know it myself do I know it. . . .

Therefore, the sage aims at removing the confusions and doubts that dazzle people. Because of this he does not use (his own judgment),

but abides in the common principle. This is what is meant by using the light (*míng*) (of one's spiritual nature).

Zhuāngzǐ 2; cf. *TT1* p.182, *SBCP* p.185

See also: **guāng, shénmíng, zhào, zhì** (8.1).

1. See e.g. Ni Hua-Ching, *Taoist Inner View*, *TIVU* p.68.

míngtáng (C) *Lit.* hall (*táng*) of light (*míng*); a ceremonial hall in the palace grounds of ancient emperors. In mystical Daoism, *míngtáng* may refer to several centres in the body, but most commonly to a centre in the head, often said to be between the eyebrows, also known as the *shàng dāntián* (upper elixir field).

References to *míngtáng* can be found in meditation texts from before the third century CE. The *Rúshìwǒwén* says that the *shàng dāntián* comprises three centres or “palaces” that lie “between the eyebrows”, one of which is the *míngtáng*:

Right in the middle, in the space between the eyebrows (*méixīn*), is heaven's gate (*tiānmén*). One inch inward is the hall of light (*míng-táng*); another inch inward is the unfathomable chamber (*dòngfáng*); another inch inward is the *níwán*. These are the three palaces (centres) of the upper (elixir) field.

Rúshìwǒwén, ZW340

In Chinese, *níwán* means ‘muddy pellet’ or ‘mud ball’, but in this context the word is probably a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*, and refers to the *níwángōng* (palace of *níwán*, palace of *nirvāṇa*).

In its worldly sense, the *míngtáng* is a grand hall built in the palace grounds of ancient emperors, used for the performance of ceremonies including offerings to heaven. The *Wénzǐ*, a Daoist classic text allegedly written by a disciple of Lǎozǐ, suggests that this external ritual points to a spiritual truth:

When emperors die, their bodies are buried in the ground. Memorial ceremonies for them are held in a hall of light (*míngtáng*). This is because the spirit is more precious than the body.

Wénzǐ 3, DZ746

See also: **huángtíng**.

mukti dvāra (S), **mukti dwār** (H), **mukat duārā** (Pu) *Lit.* door (*dvāra*) of liberation (*mukti*); the door by which the soul can leave the body, and find God; the third eye. It is a narrow door, say the mystics, in the sense that a mind enlarged by the ego cannot pass through:

O Kabīr, the gate of liberation (*mukat duārā*) is narrow,
 less than one-tenth of a mustard seed (*rāī*).
 The mind has become as big as an elephant;
 how can it pass through this gate?

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 509, AGK

O Nānak, the gate of liberation (*mukat duārā*) is very narrow:
 only the very tiny can pass through.
 Through egotism, the mind has become bloated:
 how can it pass through?

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 509, AGK

See also: **dvāra**.

nayan, nain (H/Pu) *Lit.* eye; mystically, the inner eye or spiritual eye; from the Sanskrit *naṇana* (eye, pupil of the eye). Kabīr says that this eye can see God in the “palace” of the body:

The Beloved is in the palace (*mahal*):
 behold Him with your inner eye (*nain*).

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 22, KSS1 p.65

Sometimes, *nain* refers more specifically to the centre between the two eyes, the eye centre:

Make your seat in the eye (*nain*):
 you do this by concentration of your attention.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:18.11, SBP p.152

See also: **chakshus**.

naẓar (A/P) (pl. *anẓār*) *Lit.* sight, vision, eyes; look, glance, gaze, regard; insight, perception, viewpoint; consideration, thought, thinking, study; looking at, examination, investigation, inspection; inner vision, spiritual contemplation, clairvoyance; a term covering a broad spectrum of meanings.

When used in the sense of ‘consideration’, *naẓar* is more or less synonymous with *fikr* (cogitation, thinking). Hence, such expressions as *ahl al-naẓar* (people of consideration, intellectuals), a term used synonymously with *ahl al-fikr* and *aṣḥāb al-afkār* (people of cogitation), *ahl al-‘uqūl* (people of rational faculties), and *‘uqalā’* (rational thinkers). However, in a mystical context, *ahl al-naẓar* also means ‘men of mystical vision’.

Consideration and reflection are recommended to human beings in the *Qur'ān*:

Do they not consider (*yanẓurūna*) the camels, how they are made?
 And heaven, how it was raised on high?
 And the mountains, how they were established?
 And at the earth, how it is spread out?
 Remind them, therefore, for you are a reminder.

Qur'ān 88:17–21; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

Have they not considered (*yanẓuru*) the dominion
 of the heavens and the earth,
 and what things *Allāh* has created,
 and that it may be that their hour is drawing near?
 In what other revelation will they believe,
 those who deny this?

Qur'ān 7:185; cf. KPA, MGK

Using the term to mean ‘consideration’ or ‘thinking’, Ibn al-‘Arabī explains that all human faculties have their rightful sphere of activity. Used within that context, they are productive. Used outside that field, they can be a cause of error. Thus “*kashf baṣarī* (visual unveiling)”, meaning internal mystical vision, comprehends things where “rational arguments stumble”:

The thinking man (*ṣāhib al-naẓar*) is delimited by the ruling power of his thinking (*fikr*), but thought (*fikr*) can only roam in its own specific playing field (*maydān*), which is one of many fields. Each faculty in man has a playing field in which it roams, and beyond which it should not step. If it goes beyond its field, it falls into error and makes mistakes and is described as having deviated from its straight way.

For example, visual unveiling (*kashf baṣarī*) may discover things where rational arguments stumble, because the arguments have left their proper domain. The rational faculties that are described as misguided have been led astray only by their own thinking processes, and their thinking processes have gone astray by moving about in that which is not their own abode.

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:281.15, FMIA3 (2:167) p.423; cf. SPK p.165

This is why, he says, the Sufis resorted to spiritual meditation in order to truly understand things:

Since the *ṣūfīs* saw the mistakes of those who employ thought (*naẓar*), they turned to the path in which there is no confusion so that they

might take things from the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) and become qualified by certain knowledge.

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:628.27, FMIA4 (4:285) p.386; cf. SPK p.166

Rūmī likewise regards intellectual thought as a source of confusion, and a poor means of understanding Reality:

From study (*naẓar*) and intellect (*‘aql*)
comes naught but vertigo:
Therefore, leave study (*naẓar*) and adopt expectation (*intiẓār*).
Do not seek eminence from disputation:
for one who is expectant (of divine inspiration),
listening is better than speaking.
The office of teaching (*ta’līm*) is a sort of sensual desire:
every sensual fancy is an idol (*but*) in the way.
If every busybody had found the way to His grace,
why should God have sent so many prophets?

Rūmī, Maṣnāvī IV:3315–18; cf. MJR4 p.455

Although *naẓar* is used for rational thought, the term is also used for mystical vision or insight. Ibn al-‘Arabī, for instance, uses *naẓar* for the mystic vision of the perfect man.¹ Other Sufis have used the term *ṣāḥib-i naẓar* for men of spiritual or mystic vision,² rather than for intellectuals. In a mystical sense, *naẓar* is the faculty of inner vision, to which nothing of this world can be compared. Rūmī counsels the reader to detach from material wealth and obtain instead a medicine that can open the understanding to the true nature of this world:

Sovereignty and gold will not accompany your spirit on its journey:
Give your gold away, get collyrium for your sight (*naẓar*),
so that you may see that this world is a narrow well.

Rūmī, Maṣnāvī IV:672–73; cf. MJR4 p.309

Sufis, like other mystics, point out that phenomenal forms are like foam on the surface of the sea; physical sight can only see the foam, but not the force that creates and moves it. Inner sight sees the ocean, the waves that move the foam of this world. Rūmī insists that developing this sight (*naẓar*) is the only thing that matters in human life:

How can the foam-like (phenomenal) form
move without the wave?
How can the dust rise to the zenith without the wind?
Since you have seen the dust,
namely, the form, so see the wind;

Since you have seen the foam,
 see the ocean of creative energy.
 Take heed, see, for only inner sight (*naẓar*) will avail:
 the rest of you is a lump of fat and flesh, woven together. . . .
 Dissolve the whole of this body of yours in vision (*baṣar*):
 pass into sight (*naẓar*), pass into sight (*naẓar*), into sight (*naẓar*)!
 The one sight (*naẓar*) sees only two yards of the road;
 The other sight (*naẓar*) has beheld the two worlds,
 and the face of the King.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:1459–64; cf. MJR6 p.339

The *Qurʾān* is clear that the development of the inner faculty of sight is to be done in this life; hoping for spirituality after death is a forlorn hope:

Whoever is blind here will be blind in the hereafter,
 and further astray from the path.

Qurʾān 17:72; cf. AYA

Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj says obliquely that whoever has had the highest vision of God, has become one with the Divine, and the distinction of seer and seen has disappeared in union:

Al-Ḥallāj said, “Whoever gains vision (*naẓar*) (of God) ceases to need news of God; and whoever attains the object of vision (*manẓūr*) ceases to need vision (*naẓar*).”

Rūzbihān, Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyāt 304:870, CPS p.471; cf. in SSE2 p.166

Al-Ghazālī also says that there is no higher “spiritual attainment” than the “vision” of God:

The highest spiritual attainment consists in seeing (*naẓar*) the face (*wajh*) of the Compassionate One. The most excellent enjoyment is the *maʿrifah* (gnosis), and still higher than that is the joy of the vision (*taṣawwur*) of God, none is a higher spiritual state than this.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn 4:6, IUDG4 p.406; cf. RRS p.281

Naẓar also means a look or glance. In Sufism, this implies a purposefully directed look, with attention and love. It is always said that one such look from a master can have great spiritual benefit, for a master can open the spiritual eyes of a seeker simply through the power of his own attention.

See also: **naẓar** (7.5).

1. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Meccan Revelations* 3:151.10, *FMIA5* (4:339) p.225, *SPK* p.368.
2. E.g. Saʿdī, *Ṭayyibāt* 88:10, *KSSS* p.263, *TOS* p.125 (n.1).

ner, nehora (He) *Lit.* lamp, candle; mystically, either spiritual guidance or the inner light of the soul. *Ner* and *nehora* are etymologically related to *nur* (shining) and *nahar* (it shone).

The ‘light’ mentioned in various biblical passages can be understood either as spiritual guidance or as a reference to the light of the soul. Similarly, the ‘darkness’ is either a metaphor for the human condition of spiritual ignorance or a reference to the inner darkness first encountered on the spiritual journey, which later gives way to light. The normal human condition is one of spiritual darkness, cut off from the divine light, unaware of how to live a spiritual life. However, when the inner “lamp” has been lit, when inner vision has been awakened, then the soul realizes its true relationship with the Divine:

For you are my lamp (*ner*), O Lord:
and the Lord will lighten my darkness.
2 Samuel 22:29, JCL

For you will light my candle (*ner*):
the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.
Psalms 18:29, JCL

Your word is a lamp (*ner*) to my feet,
and a light (*aur*) to my path.
Psalms 119:105; cf. KJV

For the commandment is a lamp (*ner*),
and *Torah* (teaching) is light (*aur*),
and correction and instruction are the way to life.
Proverbs 6:23; cf. JB, JCL

In kabbalistic literature, some writers have described several levels of the spiritual light within, sometimes described as ‘halls’ or ‘palaces’. By passing through the ‘gates’ or ‘doors’ between them, the soul experiences higher and higher levels of spiritual light. Speaking of the “first hall” that exists immediately beneath “His feet”, the medieval *Zohar* says that all the lights experienced are really only one light:

It is written, “Under His feet there was a kind of sapphire pavement, and like the essence of heaven in purity.”¹ The secret of secrets: there is a spirit called *sapir* (sapphire), like the brightness of a precious stone

shining on both sides. The first light (*nehora*) ascends and descends, and this white light (*nehora*) shines on all sides, above and below and to the four corners of the world. The second light (*nehora*) is both sealed and revealed. From this light (*nehora*), four lights (*nehora*) diverge in four directions. And all these lights (*nehora*) are one light (*nehora*), like the light (*nehora*) of a lamp that kindles many lights (*nehora*) before man's eyes, and these lights (*nehora*) from the lamp ascend and descend, go and return, from within the flame of the light (*nehora*) of the lamp, and they are all one light (*nehora*); so these also. All the lights (*nehora*) glisten with a reddish hue like shining bronze, as it is written, "and they sparkled like the colour of burnished bronze (*hashmal*)."²

Zohar 2:41a, WZ2 pp.597–98

See also: **aur**, **ḥashmal**, **nūr**.

1. *Exodus* 24:10.
2. *Ezekiel* 1:7.

nirat(a) (S/H) *Lit.* absorbed, engrossed, devoted; the contemplative power of the soul that enables it to experience its own inner light; the eye of the soul.

The soul has two faculties: to see the inner light (*nirat*) and to hear the inner sound (*surat*). When the *nirat* is awakened, the soul begins to see the inner worlds of light and beauty. Since, within the realms of the mind, the soul is accompanied by the mind, the mind can also be said to possess these two faculties. However, they originate – like life itself, and all its powers – with the soul. In fact, the soul *is* itself light and sound, both of which come from the same divine Source.

Physical sight is a lower reflection of the power of *nirat*. Even in this world, although it may seem to be the eyes that see, the actual experience and faculty of sight is a faculty of the attention – of the mind and soul. The eyes, for example, may be open, but unless the person is conscious, they see nothing. Similarly, sound may enter the ear and be transmitted to the brain via the nervous system, but unless a person is conscious, he will hear nothing. Consciousness is required for the perception to register.

The root of *nirat* is *nirata* (S. devoted to, fond of, attached to, engaged in, pleased, delighted), as in the *Kena Upanishad*:

May I never deny *Brahman*. May *Brahman* never deny me. May there never be denial on the part of *Brahman*; may there never be denial on my part. May all the virtues described in the *Upanishads* dwell within me, who am devoted (*nirate*) to the *Ātman* (divine Self).

Kena Upanishad, Invocation

A number of Indian *sants* (saints) have used *nirat* more specifically for the contemplative faculty of the mind and soul that sees or becomes absorbed in the inner light. Maharaj Sawan Singh (1858–1948) explains that to begin with, *nirat* appears as a faculty of the inner mind; later on it is revealed as a faculty of the soul itself:

In the primary stages, *chitta* (mind energy) serves as *nirat*. Real *nirat* is developed higher up.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 9, SG p.16

Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990) answers a question on how to develop *nirat*:

Our soul has two faculties: the faculty to hear and the faculty to see – the power to hear and the power to see. The power to see is *nirat*; the power to hear is *surat*. *Surat* will hear the sound, and *nirat* will see the light, but both come from the same Source. The light comes from the sound, and the sound comes from the light. Ultimately, they become one. We know the direction of our home with the help of that sound, and we follow the spiritual path within through the help of that light. Both have to go side by side. . . .

To develop the *nirat* means to give more time to concentration, more time to *simran* (repetition). Generally, we give more attention to the sound, to hearing the *Shabd*, because we enjoy the sound. But when we ignore the *simran* side, *nirat* is not awakened, and concentration is not complete.

The moment concentration is complete, the light is there, *nirat* is there, and the sound is very pulling. If you don't try to awaken *nirat*, which means that you don't try to concentrate with the help of *simran*, then you will hear the sound, but it will not pull you. The sound will pull you only when the concentration is complete, and the moment concentration is complete, you will also see the light.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 232, DTL pp.193–94

Nirat, he writes in a letter, can be awakened by repetition (*simran*) with the attention focused at the eye centre:

Make your *nirat* strong by fixing your attention between the two eye-brows, all the while repeating the five holy names with the attention of the mind; in fact that is the way to do *simran*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Letter 41, LOSM p.133

He also says that both the seeing and hearing faculties have to be developed alongside each other:

The faculty to hear is to catch the sound; the faculty to see is to be one with the light. When you are seeing the light and also hearing the sound, then you should try to keep your *nirat* upwards along with that sound. Don't hold your attention in that light without trying to go along with the sound, upwards. You should keep your *nirat* upwards, which means to go along with the light and also hear the sound. Sometimes one is absorbed too much in the light and doesn't want to follow the sound, but we have to follow both the sound and the light.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 233, DTL p.194

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh (1884–1951) has the same advice:

The soul cannot ascend until the *nirat* or the power of seeing is developed within. The two faculties – one of hearing and the other of seeing – are utilized by the soul for its mystic transport. Some disciples devote their attention to hearing the sound, but do not try to fix their *nirat* inside. This is a mistake, for unless the attention is fixed at the eye centre, the mind does not become motionless, and there is little pleasure in the practice.

When the *nirat* or the inner vision is fully developed, the sound that seemingly emanates from within it, becomes increasingly distinct. The soul, however, must catch the finest note; by means of which it will ascend to higher regions.

*Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul,
Excerpts from Discourses 10, SOSJ p.100*

Baba Jaimal Singh (1839–1903) advises his disciple and successor-to-be, Maharaj Sawan Singh, to keep his *surat* and *nirat* always fixed in the divine creative power:

Please do your *bhajan* (listening to the sound) and *simran* every day, whenever you are free. Whether walking around, sitting, sleeping, or doing your work, keep the love and devotion of the inner faculties of *surat* and *nirat* and the higher mind fixed in the *Shabd Dhun* (melody of the Word). Whenever you find time to sit, do so to listen to the *Shabd Dhun* – your heart should remain attached to it all the time.

Baba Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters 78, SL p.122

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh (1818–1878), the *guru* of Baba Jaimal Singh, explains that turning the attention inside is the best way to find God:

Reversing the vision, behold the flame:
unceasingly, merge the mind in it.

Apply *surat* and *nirat* to listening to the Melody.
 This is necessary preparation for the adoration of God.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 30:5.2–3, SBP p.241

Still the soul (*surat*) and mind (*man*) within yourself,
 then catch the Melody, and keep your attention in the inner sky.
 Without this method, you will never free yourself
 from the intricate web that ensnares you. . . .

Rise up, and dwell in your eye (*nainan*, i.e. eye centre):
 Concentrate yourself at this point,
 and duality will be transcended.
 Then fix your sight (*dṛishṭi*) upon the light (*jot*).
 Give up the dark (*shyām*) side and choose the bright (*set*),
 focus your *surat* and listen intently to the Melody.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:18.7–8, 11–13,
SBP p.152; cf. SBPS p.219

These mystics have all been part of the same lineage of *gurus*, using very similar terminology. Other Indian *sants*, however, have written in a similar vein. The formless Lord, says Kabīr (c.1398–1518), can be experienced by an awakened *surat* and *nirat*:

He whose colour is colourless, whose form is formless –
 How can He be seen?
 You will see Him within when your *surat* and *nirat* awake
 through the master's grace.
Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Gurudev kā ang 41, KSS p.4; cf. KWGN p.556

Such an awakening brings great joy:

The body motionless, the mind still,
surat and *nirat* also at rest –
 O Kabīr, the bliss of such a moment is not equalled
 even by a *kalpa* (4.32 billion years) in heaven.
Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Sumiran kā ang 26, KSS p.89

Dariyā Sāhib (1674–1780), speaking of the divine Word as the “Name”, also insists on stillness of the mind:

When the mind becomes still, devotion is intensified:
 then contact is made with the true Sound. . . .
 When the soul enters within through the eye of the needle (*agra nakh*),
 then the seeing and hearing faculties automatically perceive within.

Filled with true love on seeing the unwritten Name,
darkness is destroyed, and a rain of nectar falls from the sky.

Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī 2, Shabd 926–30, DG2 pp.93–94; cf. DSSK p.167

Like Kabīr, the devotee Mīrābāī (c. 1498–1547) also sings of the intense joy and inner love of an awakened *nirat* and *surat*:

I have cast away the veil of worldly shame:
only the company of saints is dear to me.
Merta, my parents' home, I have left for good.
My *surat* and *nirat*, awakened, now shine brightly.

My master has revealed to me
the mirror within my own body;
Now I dance and sing in ecstasy.

Mīrābāī, Sudhā Sindhu, Svajīvan ke pad 32:1.2, MSS p.280; cf. MDLS pp.80–81

Of *surat* and *nirat* make a lamp,
and let your longing be the wick.
Into this lamp pour oil from the market of love:
then night and day it will keep burning brightly.

Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Birah aur prem kā ang,

Shabd 16:3, MBS p.9; cf. MDLS p.67

See also: **surat**.

níwán (C) *Lit.* mud (*ní*) ball (*wán*); clay pellet or pill. Often translated as ‘mud ball’ or ‘muddy pellet’, the translation has little meaning in the Daoist context, and *níwán* is more likely to be a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit and Buddhist term *nirvāṇa*. Sometimes referred to as the *níwángōng* (palace of *níwán*, *nirvāṇa* palace), the *níwán* is the innermost part of the upper elixir field (*dāntián*), which houses the *shén* (spirit). *Níwán* also refers to the brain – more specifically, either to the top of the head (the crown) or to the centre of the brain (sometimes described as three inches in from the point between the eyebrows).¹ Because in spiritual terms the *níwán* is the uppermost point in the body, from the viewpoint of spiritual refinement it is related to and sometimes deemed synonymous with *xuánguān* (the mysterious pass)², the point of transition between the physical and the spiritual.

See also: **dāntián** (8.5), **míngtáng**.

1. *Rúshìwǒwén*, ZW340.
2. See e.g. “*níwán wèi xuánguān*” in “*Jiànfǎ sānchéng*,” *Zhōnghé jí*, DZ249, JY226.

nuqṭat al-suwaydā’ (A), **nuqṭah-’i suwaydā** (P) *Lit.* black (*suwaydā’*) point (*nuqṭah*), little black spot, dark pinpoint. *Suwaydā’* is the diminutive feminine form of the adjective *aswad* (black). According to a traditional Muslim belief, the *suwaydā’* is a little black clot of blood at the core of the heart arising from man’s original sin, which cannot be erased. Gabriel removed Muḥammad’s heart and washed it clean before taking him on his ascent (*mi’rāj*) into the presence of God. Metaphorically, *suwaydā’* or *nuqṭat al-suwaydā’* refer to the innermost core or centre of the spiritual heart.

Nuqṭah means point, spot, dot, or tip. In Sufism, it also symbolizes the encompassing oneness of all things in the one being of God. The term is similar to *nukṭah*, which has the additional meaning of the essence or core of the matter, or the subtle essence of any argument; it is also, a witty remark, a pithy saying, or a nice distinction.

Sufis have given various interpretations of the imagery. The *Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq* regards it as the focus of being that lies within the human heart:

The dark pinpoint (*nuqṭah-’i suwaydā*) of the human heart, which is the point of focus of the world of being, may also be symbolized by the beauty spot (*khāl*).

Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq, in TAT p.193; cf. in SSE1 p.44

Ḥāfiẓ also speaks of this true focus of inner being:

From love of your beard and mole (*khāl*),
Ḥāfiẓ’ head is spinning like a compass needle;
But his heart’s point (*nuqṭah-’i dīl*) is focused in its place.

Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, DHA p.30, DIH p.76; cf. DHWC (106:9–10) p.227

See also: **nuqṭah** (►1), **suwaydā’ al-qalb** (►4).

nūr (A/P) (pl. *anwār*, *anvār*) *Lit.* light, fire, brilliance, lustre, refulgence, effulgence, splendour, illumination; in Sufism, inner light, divine light, light of God; as *al-Nūr* (the Light), one of the ninety-nine names of God.

In Sufi understanding, the light and the being of the Divine are regarded as the same. The term appears in the well-known “Light Verse” in the *Qur’ān*:

God is the light (*nūr*) of the heavens and the earth;
 The likeness of His light (*nūr*) is as a niche wherein is a lamp –
 (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) –
 kindled from a blessed Tree,
 an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West,
 whose oil would well nigh shine, even if no fire touched it;
 Light (*nūr*) upon light (*nūr*):
 (God guides to His light (*nūr*) whom He will).

Qur'ān 24:35; cf. KI

Muslim scholars have suggested numerous interpretations of the verse, but the general import seems to be that God is the light in the soul, which gives life to the body.

Ni'mat Allāh Valī says that all light in the created realms is “but a shadow” of the divine Light:

Light (*nūr*) is the reality of the divine Essence and is one of the Names of the divine Essence. Any other Name that is applied to the light (*nūr*) is but a shadow of this light (*nūr*). The realm of spirits (*‘ālam-i arwāḥ*) is but one of light's (*nūr*) shadows, though luminous when compared to the material world.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.299; cf. in SSE4 p.10

Al-Ḥallāj describes it from the viewpoint of experience. “Beauty” here signifies the divine radiance of the inner Beloved:

Light (*nūr*) is the dawning of Beauty (*Jamāl*)
 in the hearts of those close to God.

Al-Ḥallāj, in Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 10:12, MARB p.193, in SSE4 p.9

Ni'mat Allāh Valī says that this “dawning” dispels all doubt and “darkness” from the mind:

Darkness and unbelief were turned out from the heart,
 when the light (*nūr*) of this understanding rushed into the heart.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.85; cf. in SSE13 p.165

Inner light, says Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, is what leads the heart to God. It is of the same nature as mystic revelation:

Lights (*anwār*) are the riding-mounts of hearts (*qulūb*)
 and of their innermost centres (*asrār*).

Light (*nūr*) is the army of the heart (*qalb*),
 just as darkness is the army of the mind (*nafs*).
 So when God wishes to come to the help of His servant,
 He furnishes him with armies of lights (*junūd al-anwār*),
 and takes from him the reinforcements (*madad*)
 of darkness and otherness (*al-ẓulm wa al-aghyār*).
 Revelation (*kashf*) belongs to the light (*nūr*),
 discernment to understanding (*baṣīrah*),
 and both advance and retreat belong to the heart (*qalb*).
Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh, Kitāb al-Ḥikam 6:55–57, HAAI pp.55–56; cf. BWIC p.61

Nūr appears in a great many compound expressions such as *nūr al-Ḥaqq* (light of Truth, light of God); *nūr Allāh* (light of God); *al-Nūr al-aqṣá al-‘alá* (Light supernal); *nūr al-anwār* (light of lights), the radiance of God or God Himself; *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadīyah* (the Light of Muḥammad), the creative light of God; *nūr al-baṣīrah* (light of insight), the light of spiritual insight or mystical experience; *nūr al-bāṭin* (inner light); *nūr-i dil* (light of the heart), the inner light; *‘abd al-Nūr* (servant of the Light), a saint; and so on. *Nūr al-bāṭin* was used by Jewish Sufi pietists (*ḥasidim*) of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Egypt and Spain for the inner light experienced during meditation, which they called *khalwah bāṭinah* (inner seclusion).

See also: **anwār**, **ḍiyā’**, **miṣbāḥ** (5.1), **al-Nūr** (2.1).

nūr al-ghālib (A), **nūr-i ghālib** (P) *Lit.* the dominant (*ghālib*) light (*nūr*); the divine light, the inner light, permeating creation and inherent within all. Rūmī writes that this light has been given to all, but only the saints are fully conscious of it within themselves:

The dominant light (*nūr-i ghālib*) (of the saints)
 is secure from defect and dimness
 between the two fingers of the light of God (*nūr-i Ḥaqq*).
 God has scattered that light (*nūr*) over all spirits,
 but only the fortunate have held out their skirts to receive it.
 He who has gained that strewn largesse of light (*nūr*)
 has turned his face away from all except God.
 Whoever lacks such a skirt of love
 is left without a share of that strewn largesse of light (*nūr*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:759–62; cf. MJR2 p.43

Rūmī is alluding to the *ḥadīth* that runs:

God created the creatures in darkness, then He sprinkled some of His light upon them. Those who some of the light reached took the right way, while those whom it missed wandered from the straight road.

Ḥadīth, AMBF 14, in MJR7 p.67

See also: **nūr**.

nūr Allāh (A/P), **nūr-i Allāh**, **nūr-i Ḥaqq**, **nūr-i Khudā** (P) *Lit.* light (*nūr*) of God (*Allāh*, *Ḥaqq*, *Khudā*); light of Truth or Reality (*Ḥaqq*); the divine light that permeates all creation.

Rūmī says that this light of God is the real sustenance for a human being. It is man's "original food", for which he spends his life searching. Only contact with the light of God will satisfy his spiritual hunger. If he tries to satisfy his inherent yearning by turning to the material world, he will only remain restless and unsatisfied. Rūmī uses the example of someone who has been taking some form of cleansing clay due to illness, but has become so used to it that he considers the food of his diseased condition to be his "natural food":

He is like someone who from disease has become fond of eating clay,
and, supposing it to be his natural food,
has forgotten his original food,
and has turned his face to the food of disease.
Having given up honey, he has eaten poison:
he has made the food of disease his nourishment.
Man's original food is the light of God (*nūr-i Khudā*)
the food of animals is improper for him;
But, in consequence of disease,
his mind has fallen into the delusion
that day and night he should eat water and clay.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:1080–84; cf. MJR2 p.277

Sometimes, in a more specific sense, *nūr Allāh* may refer to the light of the realm known as *maqām Allāh* (station of *Allāh*).

See also: **nūr**.

nūrī (A/P) *Lit.* luminous, bright, shining, brilliant, radiant, lustrous; the adjectival form of *nūr* (light); in Sufism, used in descriptions of inner realities. *Al-Nūrī* (the Radiant) is also used as a name for God. See **nūr**.

nūr-i dīl (P) *Lit.* light (*nūr*) of the heart (*dīl*); light of the inner being, the site of mystical experience.

Rūmī says that the light of God (*nūr Allāh*) gives light to the heart, which in turn gives light to the physical eyes. The light within is the source of life or consciousness by which the bodily senses function. Speaking of light, inner and outer, he writes:

The outward is from the sun and from *Suhā* (a small star):
 the inward is from the reflection of the beams of glory.
 The light (*nūr*) that gives light (*nūr*) to the eye (*chashm*)
 is in truth the light of the heart (*nūr-i dīl*);
 The light of the eye (*nūr-i chashm*) has its origin
 in the light of the heart (*nūr-i dīl*).

Again, the light (*nūr*) that
 gives light (*nūr*) to the heart (*dīl*)
 is the light of God (*nūr-i Khudā*) which is pure and separate
 from the light of intellect (*‘aql*) and sense (*ḥiss*).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 1125–27; cf. MJR2 p.63

Experience of the inner light lifts a seeker above all bodily and physical concerns. Rūmī relates a story in which Pharaoh threatens a group of mystics with severe physical torture, imagining that they would be frightened:

He (Pharaoh) did not know that they had been delivered,
 and were seated at the window of the light of the heart (*nūr-i dīl*):
 They had distinguished between their shadows (bodies)
 and their real selves,
 and were brisk and alert and happy and joyful.

If the mortar of heaven (fate) should pound them small
 a hundred times in this miry place,
 since they had seen the origin of this (bodily) composition,
 they would not be afraid of the products of imagination.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III: 1725–28; cf. MJR4 p.97

See also: **ḥawāss**.

obhāsa (Pa), **avabhāsa** (S) *Lit.* light, lustre, illumination, splendour, effulgence, aura; a Buddhist term for the inner light seen as a result of concentration in meditation; a sign of spiritual progress, but also regarded as one of the ten *vipassanūpakkilesa* (imperfections of insight) when the meditator becomes

attached to the experience, and fails to progress further. The Sanskrit *avabhāsa* also refers to the radiance of the *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and other celestial beings in the heavenly realms.

The twentieth-century Thai teacher Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo describes *obhāsa* as “a bright light that enables you to see places both far and near”,¹ and as

an amazingly bright light, blotting out your surroundings (*e.g.* if you’re sitting in a forest or patch of thorns, they won’t exist for you) – bright to the point where you get carried away, losing all sense of your body and mind, wrapped up in the brightness.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, The Craft of the Heart, CHLD p.80

The Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982) adds that the inner light can take various forms depending upon the individual:

When the meditator, in the exercise of noticing, is able to keep exclusively to the present body-and-mind process, without looking back to past processes or ahead to future ones, then, as a result of insight, (the mental vision of) a brilliant light will appear to him. To one it will appear like the light of a lamp, to others like a flash of lightning, or like the radiance of the moon or the sun, and so on. With one it may last for just one moment, with others it may last longer.

Mahasi Sayadaw, Progress of Insight, PISM pp.13–14

The *Upakkilesa Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* emphasizes the importance of perceiving both a shining light (*obhāsa*) and the appearance of *rūpas* (forms or images, seen in visions during meditation). According to this *sutta*, the Buddha asks his disciple Anuruddha and his two companions what they are experiencing in their meditation, and whether they are happy with their progress. Anuruddha replies that they see both light (*obhāsa*) and the vision of forms (*dassanaṃ rūpānaṃ*) within, but that these experiences do not persist. The Buddha advises them to seek the reason for it within themselves. Then, drawing on his own experience, he identifies several *upakkilesas* (impurities and obstructions) that can lead to a break in focus and the consequent loss of inner vision. In the case of *obhāsa*, he says that his mind wavered and lost concentration due to the arising of doubt:²

“Anuruddha, have you attained any superhuman states, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable abiding?”

“Venerable sir, as we abide here diligent, ardent and resolute, we perceive both light (*obhāsa*) and a vision of forms (*dassanaṃ rūpānaṃ*). Soon afterwards the light and the vision of forms disappear, but we have not discovered the cause of that.”

“You should discover the cause for that, Anuruddha. Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened *bodhisatta*, I too perceived both light (*obhāsa*) and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the light (*obhāsa*) and the vision of forms disappeared, and I thought: ‘What is the cause and condition why the light (*obhāsa*) and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then I considered thus: ‘Doubt (*vicikicchā*) arose in me, and because of the doubt my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light (*obhāsa*) and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that doubt will not arise in me again.’”

Majjhima Nikāya 128, *Upakkilesa Sutta*, *PTSM3* pp.157–58; cf. *MDBB* p.1012

Emanations of light by celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* are a characteristic feature of the many elaborately fanciful *Mahāyāna sūtras*. In the *Shūrangama-samādhi Sūtra*, the celestial *bodhisattva* Mañjushrī has finished speaking:

Thereupon the *Bhagavat* (Mañjushrī), rising into the air to the height of seven palm trees, sat down cross-legged and emitted a radiance (*avabhāsa*) which illuminated the innumerable universes of the ten regions. The whole assembly saw the innumerable *buddhas* of the ten regions who were all expounding the *Shūrangama-samādhi*, adding nothing and omitting nothing, and from afar the assembly heard them.

In their own turn the *buddhas* of the ten regions, rising into the air to the height of seven palm trees, sat down cross-legged and emitted a radiance (*avabhāsa*) which illuminated the innumerable universes of the ten regions. The beings of those universes also saw the Buddha Shākyamuni (the historical Buddha) sitting in the air, his legs crossed. Those assemblies took up flowers and, from afar, scattered them over the Buddha Shākyamuni. They saw those flowers join together in the air in the shape of a flowery parasol.

Shūrangama-samādhi Sūtra 165, *T15* 642:644b, *SSSL* pp.232–33

See also: **vipassanūpakkilesa** (8.1).

1. Ajahn Lee Dhammharo, *Basic Themes*, *BTAD* p.127.
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 128, *Upakkilesa Sutta*, *PTSM3* pp.155–62, *MDBB* pp.1010–15.

pañcha-chakshus (S), **pañca-cakkhu**, **pañca-cakkhūni** (Pa), **spyan lnga** (T), **wǔyǎn** (C), **gogen** (J) *Lit.* five (*pañcha*, *lnga*, *wǔ*, *go*) eyes (*chakshus*, *spyan*, *yǎn*, *gen*); in *Theravāda* Buddhism, the five kinds of eye or vision, of which only a *buddha* possesses all five. In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, it is understood that the five forms of vision are developed during the course of spiritual evolution. Some aspects of the five *chakshus* also appear among the six (or five)

abhijñās (supernatural knowledge, spiritual powers) and three supernatural forms of knowledge (*tevijjā*). There are also a variety of Buddhist terms for the spiritual eye or spiritual vision, which is entirely non-material in nature.

According to Buddhist psychology, every physical sense organ is enlivened by a corresponding faculty of mind or consciousness. Vision (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*, eye consciousness), for example, is the faculty of mind or consciousness that makes it possible for input from the physical eyes to be subjectively experienced as sight. Even physical sight, therefore, is understood as a form of consciousness. The same is true for the other senses.

Five kinds of eye or vision (S. *pañcha-chakshus*, Pa. *pañca-cakkhu*) are commonly mentioned, although the many texts exhibit some degree of variation and inconsistency, and other terms are also used for the various forms of spiritual vision. The first three of these eyes or forms of vision are listed in several places in the Pali texts,¹ which are further analysed and categorized in the analytical commentaries.² In general, they are described as:

1. *Māmsa-cakkhu* (Pa), *māmsa-chakshus* (S). *Lit.* eye of flesh; physical eye, whose range is limited; in *Mahāyāna*, the vision of a particular being – human, animal, or celestial; a restricted vision, the extent of the restriction being particular to each kind of being. Certain birds, for instance, have ultra-keen long-distance vision, while *devas* (deities) are said to be able to see all things. The Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250) says that compared to the eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*), the bodily eye is blind:

Wisdom, whose light is most brilliant, is called the eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*). Without this eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*), a person, even though he has a bodily eye (*māmsa-chakshus*), is like a blind man (*andha*); although he claims to have an eye, he is no different from the animals. The person who has wisdom distinguishes by himself the beautiful from the ugly without depending on another's teaching. The person without wisdom follows others from east to west like a cow or a camel with pierced nose following its leader.

Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* 46:3.3.6,
T25 1509:282a; cf. TVW4 p.1614

2. *Dibba-cakkhu* (Pa), *divya-chakshus*, *daiva-chakshus* (S). *Lit.* divine (*dibba*) eye (*cakkhu*); the celestial or heavenly eye whereby subtle, astral, and celestial visions are seen; the ability to see all that is happening in heaven and earth, whether near or far; in Buddhism, one of the six (or sometimes five) supranormal forms of intuitive knowledge or awareness (Pa. *abhijñā*, S. *abhijñā*) developed by means of concentrated meditation and contemplation, and said to be among the attributes of a *buddha*, an *arhat*, or a *tathāgata*; also,

one of the three forms of supernatural knowledge (*tevijjā*); thus, knowledge of the death and rebirth of all sentient beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*, knowledge of disappearance and reappearance) according to their good and bad deeds (*kamma*), also known as *yathākammūpaga-ñāṇa* (knowledge according to the result of actions); the eye that can see causes and effects; the eye that can see in physical darkness, over long distances, and through obstructions; clairvoyance; the counterpart of *dibba-sota* (Pa) or *divya-shrotra* (S), the divine, celestial or heavenly ear, or clairaudience, which can hear all sounds, subtle and gross, far and near.

As a monk relates, after having met the Buddha:

I know my former abodes (births);
Possessing the purified divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*),
I have the threefold knowledge (*tevijjā*),
have obtained supernormal powers (*iddhis*),
and am skilled in knowing the minds of others (*ceto-pariyāya*).

Samyutta Nikāya 8:12, *Vangīsa Sutta*, PTSS1 p.196, KNJ

Similarly, in the early Pali poetry of the elder nuns:

Through practice, I have cleansed the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*).
I know my previous lives, ...
I know where I have lived before.

Therīgāthā 13:332, *Sundarītherīgāthā*, PTST p.155; cf. TPBW pp.168–69

And more extensively, and according to a description of the powers (*abhiññā*) of a spiritually advanced monk, of which similar versions are repeated in all the main *sutta* collections:³

With heart serene, ... he (the homeless monk) directs and bends his mind to knowledge of the fall and rise of beings. With the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), purified and surpassing that of men, he sees beings as they pass from one state of existence to another – base and noble, well-favoured and ill-favoured, happy and wretched, according to their deeds (*kamma*). And he knows: “Those beings who were evil in thought and word and deed, disparaging the noble ones (*ariya*) and holding evil views – they suffer the kammic consequences of their evil views. On dissolution of the body, after death, they are reborn in some miserable state of suffering, in hell. But those beings, who have conducted themselves well in thought and word and deed, praising the noble ones (*ariya*), and holding right views – they reap the kammic reward of their right views. On dissolution of the body, after death, they are reborn in some happy state, a heavenly world.” Thus, with

the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) surpassing that of men, he sees beings as they pass from one state of existence to another, . . . according to their deeds (*kamma*).

Dīgha Nikāya 2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta, PTSD1 pp.82–83; cf. TBLD p.107

Many instances are given in the Pali *suttas* in which the divine eye functions as a kind of high-order clairvoyance.⁴ It is said of the Prince Vipassī, for example, who exhibited signs of advanced spiritual evolution from an early age: “Owing to the results of past *kamma*, the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) was present to Prince Vipassī, with which he could see for a league day and night alike.”⁵ Likewise, “the Lord (the Buddha), with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) surpassing that of humans, saw the thousands of *devas* taking up residence in Pāṭaligāma.”⁶ And of King Mahāsudassana, “With the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) which he possessed as the result of (past) *kamma*, he saw where treasure, owned and ownerless, was hidden.”⁷ Or as the Buddha’s disciple Kassapa says to the sceptical Prince Pāyāsi:

Well, Prince, it appears that your reply is like that of the blind man when you ask how I know about the thirty-three gods and their longevity. O Prince, the other world cannot be seen the way you are thinking, with the physical eyes (*maṃsa-cakkhu*). O Prince, those ascetics and *brāhmaṇs* who seek in the jungle thickets and the recesses of the forest for a resting place that is quiet, with little noise – they stay there unwearied, ardent; restrained, purifying the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and with that purified divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) that exceeds the powers of human sight, they see both this world and the next. . . . That, O Prince, is how the other world can be seen, and not the way you are thinking, with the physical eyes (*maṃsa-cakkhu*). . . . Therefore, O Prince, admit that there is another world . . . and that good and evil deeds bear fruits or results.

Dīgha Nikāya 23, Pāyāsi Sutta, PTSD2 p.329; cf. TBLD p.356

According to the *Vimuttimaggā* (‘Path of Liberation’)⁸ – a text originally written in Pali, but known from a sixth-century Chinese translation – there are “two kinds of divine sight (*dibba-cakkhu*)” – that which is the result of good or wholesome *kamma* and that which arises as a result of effort. The effort implied is that of meditation, specifically, says the *Vimuttimaggā*, meditation on a light *kaṣiṇa* (*āloka kaṣiṇa*), a *kaṣiṇa* being an object used as a focus for meditation. The text continues that in order to develop “divine sight”, all impurities must be suppressed, for otherwise they disturb meditative concentration. If such purification alone does not result in “divine sight”, then meditation on the light *kaṣiṇa* is required:

If one wishes to cause the arising of divine sight (*dibba-cakkhu*), he should suppress these defilements: uncertainty, wrong mindfulness, rigidity and torpor, pride, wrong joy, slanderous talk, excessive exercise of energy, too little exercise of energy, frivolous talk, perceptions of diversity, and excessive investigation of forms. If any one of these defilements appears in the course of the practice of divine sight, concentration is lost. If concentration is lost, light is lost, vision of things is lost. Therefore these defilements should be well suppressed.

If he suppresses these defilements, but does not acquire facility in concentration, his power of divine sight (*dibba-cakkhu*) will be limited. . . . That *yogin* sees a limited splendour with limited divine sight. His vision of forms is also limited; therefore the Blessed One taught thus: “Whenever my concentration is limited, my eye is limited; and with a limited eye I know a limited splendour and I see limited forms. At a time when my concentration is immeasurable, my eye is possessed of immeasurable divine sight (*dibba-cakkhu*); and with an immeasurable divine sight (*dibba-cakkhu*), I know immeasurable splendour and I see immeasurable forms.”

Arahanta Upatissa, Vimuttimagga 9, T32 1648:444; cf. PFVM pp.224–25

“Divine sight”, explains the *Vimuttimagga*, results in full knowledge of *kamma*. One who is blessed with such vision knows the future, together with the *kamma* of all sentient beings, where and how they will die and be reborn.

Nāgārjuna says that a *bodhisattva* with the divine eye can observe the sad picture of life in the realms of rebirth:

The *bodhisattva* who possesses the divine eye (*divya-chakshus*) sees beings wandering through the five destinies (gods, men, ghosts, animals, hell beings) and whirling about in them. They die among the gods and are reborn among men; they die among men and are reborn among the gods; they die among the gods and are reborn in hell; they die in hell and are reborn among the gods; they die among the gods and are reborn among the *pretas* (ghosts); they die among the *pretas* and are again reborn among the gods; they die among the gods and are reborn among the animals; they die among the animals and are reborn among the gods; they die among the gods and again are reborn among the gods. And it is the same for hell beings (*nāraka*), the *pretas*, and the animals.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra 27:2, T25 1509:175b; cf. TVW2 p.740

He adds that seeing with “the divine eye (*divya-chakshus*) is easy – just as seeing (external) forms is easy when the sun has risen”.⁹

3. *Paññā-cakkhu* (Pa), *prajñā-chakshus*, *huiyǎn*, *zhìhuì yǎn*, *zhìyǎn* (C). Lit. eye of knowledge or wisdom (*paññā*, *hui*, *zhì*); the eye that sees both conditioned (*saṃskṛita*) and unconditioned (*asaṃskṛita*) things (*dharma*s) – i.e. that sees the true nature of things; the eye of omniscience that sees everything that can be known; the eye that sees the ultimate Void or Emptiness (*Shūnyatā*); the mystical insight or gnosis developed by meditation; depicted in Buddhist art as a vertical and ever-open eye upon the forehead.

Among human beings, this form of mystical insight is rare. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha says that “those beings are few who possess the noble eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*).”¹⁰ According to the Pali *Itivuttaka*:

Whoever acquires the unsurpassed eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*)
is liberated from all suffering (*dukkha*).

Itivuttaka 3:12, *Cakkhu Sutta*, PTSI p.52

The Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna explains that *prajñā-chakshus* is the vision that is free of intellectual knowledge:

Just as, in thick fog, one sees something that is not yellow as yellow,
so by the play of conceptual knowledge one finds *dharma*s that are
merely superficial. Just as a pure eye, not surrounded by fog, sees
correctly as yellow that which is yellow, so the pure eye of wisdom
(*prajñā-chakshus*), freed from conceptual knowledge, sees the true
nature of things (*dharma*s).

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra 10:10, T25 1509:99a; cf. TVW1 p.276

And similarly:

He who wears the robes and begs his food (i.e. a monk)
does not know restlessness; his mind is always fixed.
With the eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*, C. *zhìhuì yǎn*)
he contemplates the reality of all *dharma*s.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra 23, T25 1509:161a;

cf. EGPW pp.301–2, TVW2 p.661

A number of more-or-less synonymous terms are used in Chinese texts such as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, which speaks of the “eye of wisdom (*zhìyǎn*), pure and clear” that sees everything. This is the eye of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*:

In all the assemblies of the *buddhas* (*fó*),
in every place, spread throughout the ten directions –
All, by way of the deep ocean of profound wisdom,
follow the *tathāgata*’s (C. *rúlái*) path to *nirvāṇa* (C. *jìmiè*).

One by one, these boundless beams of light
 enter inconceivable realms.
 Their eye of wisdom (*zhìyǎn*), pure and clear,
 is aware of everything:
 This is the way and the state of *bodhisattvas*.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 6, T10 279:29b22–25

Of pure mind, an illumined one
 acts without hindrance;
 With an eye of wisdom (*zhìyǎn*) penetrating everywhere,
 he is of great assistance to all living beings.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 13, T10 279:64c6–7

Subtle is their awareness and perception, and so too their conduct.
 They expound the truth to all living beings, near and far.
 Who is not joyful on hearing them?
 Such is the way (*dào*) followed by those who are empty (*xūkōng*).

With an eye of wisdom (*zhìyǎn*) that is pure and clear, incomparable,
 they perceive all things with perfect clarity.
 Such is the discerning wisdom that distinguishes them.
 Such is the way (*dào*) followed by the incomparable.

Their boundless and inexhaustible virtues,
 they have developed to perfection,
 to purify and clarify all living beings.
 Such is the way (*dào*) followed by the peerless.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 20, T10 279:110b21–26

Those who cling to material reality lack the mystic vision that sees the
 omnipresence of the Buddha:

People grasp and cling to things
 because they regard the body as real.
 Since a *tathāgata* (C. *rúlái*) is not something to be grasped,
 in the end, they never get to meet him.

Such people lack the eye of wisdom (*huìyǎn*)
 and do not get to meet a *buddha* (C. *fó*).
 Through uncountable aeons (S. *kalpas*),
 they go on revolving in the ocean of birth and death.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 16, T10 279:83a5–8

4. *Dharma-chakshus* (S), *dhamma-cakkhu* (Pa). *Lit.* eye that sees the truth of the Buddha's teachings and of the four noble truths (the existence of suffering; the origin of suffering, which is craving and clinging to desires; the cessation of suffering by putting an end to craving; and the path or means to end suffering, which is the eightfold noble path); the eye that sees all things and phenomena (*dhammas*) for what they really are – impermanent, being born, growing, aging, and fading into extinction; an awareness enjoyed by noble disciples (*ariya-puggala*), beginning with the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) – one who has entered the supramundane or transcendental path (*lokuttara-magga*).

In the Pali *suttas*, it is commonly said that an individual's *dhamma-cakkhu* has opened when someone in dialogue with the Buddha suddenly understands his meaning. The *dhamma-cakkhu* is regarded as superior to the *dibba-cakkhu* (heavenly eye), which is an extended form of clairvoyance, and inferior to the *paññā-cakkhu* (wisdom eye, gnosis), which is the vision of *arahanta* (noble one, enlightened one), and which in turn is inferior to *samanta-cakkhu* (all-encompassing eye) or *buddha-cakkhu* (*buddha* eye) of a *buddha*.

Constant change is the nature of existence. Recognition and awareness of this leads to a fresh outlook on life. Nothing in existence is stable. Human beings, animals, birds, fish, invertebrates, trees and plants, planets, stars, and galaxies – everything follows the same pattern, the same process of birth, growth, aging, and extinction. The lifespan of galaxies, stars and planets is in the order of billions of years; some creatures may live only for a matter of hours or days. In the subatomic world, some 'particles' appear and disappear in the tiniest fractions of a second. Everything changes, but nothing is lost – things transform into other things in a seemingly never-ending dance.

Attainment of the *dhamma* eye and awareness of the impermanence of everything leads to increasingly letting go of the fetters that bind one to the world. It detaches one from the insidious pleasures of *saṃsāra* (transmigration, the worlds of death and rebirth) and leads eventually to liberation from suffering. Giving an example, the Buddha says that possession of the *dhamma* eye is a fortune beyond compare:

“*Bhikkhus*, suppose that the great ocean were to be destroyed and eliminated except for two or three drops of water. What do you think, *bhikkhus*, which would be greater: the water in the great ocean that has been destroyed and eliminated or the two or three drops of water that remain?”

“Venerable sir, the water in the great ocean that has been destroyed and eliminated would be far greater. The two or three drops of water that remain would be trifling. They would not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or even a hundred thousandth part of the water in the great ocean that has been destroyed and eliminated.”

“In the same way, *bhikkhus*, for a noble disciple, accomplished in view who has made the breakthrough (to stream entry), the suffering that has been destroyed and eliminated is far greater, while that which remains is trifling.... Of such great benefit, *bhikkhus*, is breaking through to the *Dhamma*, of such great benefit is obtaining the *Dhamma* eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*).”

Samyutta Nikāya 13:8, *Samudda Sutta*, PTSS2 pp.136–37; cf. CDBB pp.624–25,

SNTB

5a. *Samanta-cakkhu* (Pa). *Lit.* all-encompassing (*samanta*) or universal eye; the vision of a *buddha*, whose wisdom and vision is perfect, encompassing all things. As the All-Seeing One or the Eye of the World, *Samanta-cakkhu* is commonly used as an epithet of the Buddha, referring to the Buddha’s omniscience.

5b. *Buddha-chakshus* (S), *buddha-cakkhu* (Pa), C. *guǎngdà mù*. *Lit.* eye or vision of an awakened one (*buddha*); completely unobstructed vision of all things; the eye that has direct insight into all things (*dharma*s); the eye that sees into the hearts and minds of others, seeing their strengths, their weaknesses, their inclinations, and their degree of spiritual evolution. In *Mahāyāna* texts, the *buddha-chakshus* replaces *samanta-cakkhu* as the fifth of the *pañcha-chakshus*, although the term is nonetheless used in Pali texts. In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha describes the realization of his mission:¹¹

Out of compassion for beings, I surveyed the world with the eye of a *buddha* (*buddha-cakkhu*). As I did so, I saw beings with little dust (of worldliness) in their eyes and those with much, those with keen faculties and those with dull, those with good attributes and those with bad, those easy to teach and those hard, some of them seeing disgrace and danger in the other world. Just as in a pond of blue or red or white lotuses, some lotuses – born and growing in the water – might flourish while immersed in the water, without rising up from the water; some might stand at an even level with the water; while some might rise up from the water and stand without being wetted by the water – so too, surveying the world with the eye of an awakened one (*buddha-cakkhu*), I saw beings with little dust (of worldliness) in their eyes and those with much, *etc.*

Majjhima Nikāya 26, *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*, PTSM1 p.169; cf. MNTB

According to the Chinese text of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*:

The vast eye (*guǎngdà mù*) of a *tathāgata* (C. *rúlái*)
is as pure and clear as the Void (*xūkōng*),
perceiving all beings with perfect clarity.

The great light of the *buddha*-body (*fóshēn*),
radiates throughout the ten directions,
manifesting everywhere.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 3, T10 279:15a25–28

These, then, are the five kinds of eye or vision that are listed in *Theravāda* texts. *Mahāyāna* texts elaborate on these five, according to the *Mahāyāna* perspective. The Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, for instance, describes the *bodhisattva*'s evolution of vision through the five *chakshus*. Owing to the limitations of the physical eye, he begins, a *bodhisattva* seeks to develop the divine eye. But since that is still insufficient to comprehend Reality, the *bodhisattva* seeks to acquire the eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*):

The bodily eye (*māṃsa-chakshus*) sees what is close up, does not see what is far off; sees what is in front, does not see what is behind, sees what is external, does not see what is internal; sees during the day time, does not see at night time; sees what is on top, does not see what is beneath.

Because of these limitations, the *bodhisattva* seeks the divine eye (*divya-chakshus*). Having obtained the divine eye (*divya-chakshus*), he sees what is distant and what is near, what is in front and what is behind, what is internal and what is external; he sees during the day and during the night; he sees what is above and what is below, for there are no further limitations. This divine eye (*divya-chakshus*) sees the origin of conditioned things that arise from causes and conditions, but it does not see their true nature (*dharmatā*), namely, emptiness (*shūnyatā*), signlessness (*animitta*), wishlessness (*apraṇihita*), non-arising (*anutpāda*), non-cessation (*anirōdha*).

And then it is the same as previously: in order to see the true nature (*dharmatā*), the *bodhisattva* seeks the wisdom eye (*prajñā-chakshus*). Having obtained the wisdom eye (*prajñā-chakshus*), he no longer sees beings (*sattva*); he has completely eliminated the signs of identity and difference; he rejects all clinging and accepts no *dharma*.

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra 50:6, T25 1509:305c; cf. TVW5 pp.1870–71

But the eye of wisdom, he continues, is still insufficient, for it sees the oneness in everything, making no distinctions even between one being and another. The *dharma* eye, he adds, is still inadequate for a *bodhisattva*, because it does not know the means of liberating other beings. What is required is the highest spiritual vision, that of a *buddha*:

However, the wisdom eye (*prajñā-chakshus*) cannot save beings. Why? Because it does not distinguish them; this is why the *bodhisattva*

produces the *dharma* eye (*dharma-chakshus*). By means of this eye, he knows that a particular man, by practising a particular *dharma* (teaching, practice), has obtained a particular kind of *bodhi* (wisdom); he knows all the methods (*upāya-mukha*) suitable for each being in particular to attain the realization of *bodhi*.

But the *dharma* eye does not know the means appropriate to save all beings everywhere; this is why the *bodhisattva* seeks the *buddha* eye (*buddha-chakshus*). There is nothing of which this *buddha* eye (*buddha-chakshus*) is unaware; there is no mystery however secret it may be that it cannot discover. What is distant for other people is close for the *buddha*; what is obscure for others is clear for the *buddha*; what is doubtful for others is clear for the *buddha*; what is subtle (*sūkshma*) for others is coarse (*audārika*) for the *buddha*; what is deep for others is shallow for the *buddha*. By means of this *buddha* eye (*buddha-chakshus*), there is nothing that is not understood, seen, known or felt. Free of thinking (*manasikāra*), the *buddha* eye (*buddha-chakshus*) is always clear on all *dharma*s (things).

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra 50:6, T25 1509:305c–306, TVW5 p.1871

Since Reality is way beyond all attempts at conceptualization, it may justifiably be questioned whether such distinctions have any real meaning other than that of scholarly analysis. From a general spiritual perspective, the main point is that mystical insight develops from the purely material to the omniscience of a *buddha*.

Elsewhere, Nāgārjuna adds that a *bodhisattva* thinks, “If I do not have the *buddha* eye (*buddha-chakshus*), I am no different from a blind man (*andha*). If I am not guided by the *buddhas*, I will be committed to dead ends,”¹² and likewise attainment of the eye of wisdom (*prajñā-chakshus*) requires destruction of “all the passions (*klesha*) and impressions (*vāsanā*)”, as the Buddha had done.¹³

Other *Mahāyāna* texts mention various additional forms or aspects of mystical vision. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* attributes ten kinds of vision to *bodhisattvas*:

A great *bodhisattva* has ten kinds of eye (*yǎn*): the eye of flesh (*ròuyǎn*), which sees all forms; the celestial eye (*tiānyǎn*), which sees the minds of all sentient beings; the wisdom eye (*huìyǎn*), which sees the range of the faculties of all sentient beings; the *dharma* eye (*fǎyǎn*), which sees the true character of all things (*dharma*s); the *buddha* eye (*fúyǎn*), which sees the ten powers (*shí lì*) of a *tathāgata* (C. *rúlái*); the eye of knowledge (*zhìyǎn*), which knows and sees all things; the eye of light (*guāngmíng yǎn*), which sees the *buddha*-light; the eye of leaving birth and death (*chū shēngsǐ yǎn*), which sees *nirvāṇa*; the unveiled eye (*wú ài yǎn*), which is vision without hindrance; and the eye of omniscience (*yīqìè zhìyǎn*), which sees the realm of Reality in

its universal aspect. Based on these ten, *bodhisattvas* attain the eye (*yǎn*) of supreme (*wúshàng*) knowledge (*dàzhì huì*) of *buddhas*.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 57, T10 279:302c18–25

Bodhisattvas are also able to bestow these kinds of vision upon those they teach:

When a great *bodhisattva* gives eyes (*yǎn*), he cherishes great love for those who ask. He lovingly arranges assemblies to strengthen the effect of his teachings (*dharma*), so that seekers may give up their worldly attachments and indulgences, relinquish their bonds of desire, and work towards enlightenment (C. *pútí*, S. *bodhi*). They then heed his advice to calm and still their minds, and they follow his instructions at all times. . . .

In these ways, he then bestows the merit of the roots of goodness: “May all sentient beings attain the supreme eye (*zuìshèng yǎn*) that guides them in everything; . . . attain the unveiled eye (*wúài yǎn*) that opens up the treasury of universal knowledge; . . . attain the pure physical eye (*ròuyǎn*), clear and bright, that can never be deceived; . . . attain the pure celestial eye (*tiānyǎn*), with clear vision of the births, deaths, and *karma* of all sentient beings; . . . attain the pure *dharma* eye (C. *fǎyǎn*), and follow the *buddha* into his realm; . . . attain the eye of wisdom (*zhìhuì yǎn*), and abandon all conceptual speculation and attachment; . . . attain the complete *buddha* eye (*fóyǎn*), and attain full awareness and understanding of all things; . . . attain the universal eye (*pǔyǎn*), and perceive all realms without hindrance; . . . attain the pure unclouded eye (*lí chīyì yǎn*), and realize the essential nonexistence of all realms and all beings; . . . be fully endowed with the pure unveiled eye (*wú zhàngài yǎn*), and attain the ten powers (*shílì*) of a *tathāgata* (*rúlái*). This is how a great *bodhisattva* bestows the merit of the roots of goodness when giving eyes (*yǎn*). It is to let all sentient beings attain the clear and pure eye (*qīngjìng yǎn*) of universal knowledge (*yīqiè zhì*).

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 27, T10 279:144c13–45a1

See also: **chakshus**.

1. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Saṅgīti Sutta*, PTSD3 p.219; *Itivuttaka* 3:12, *Cakkhu Sutta*, PTSI p.52.
2. E.g. *Sāratthapakāsinī* (*Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*), on *Samyutta Nikāya* 35:2, *Ajjhattānicca Sutta*, PTSS4 p.1, CDBB p.1397 (n.3).
3. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:28, *Pañcangika Samādhi Sutta*, PTSA3 p.29; *Majjhima Nikāya* 36, *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, PTSM1 p.248.
4. See also e.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 25 (*Udumbarika Sihanāda Sutta*), 28 (*Sampasādaniya Sutta*), 34 (*Dasuttara Sutta*), PTSD3 pp.52, 111–12, 282.

5. *Dīgha Nikāya* 14, *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.20–21, TBLD p.207.
6. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 p.87, TBLD p.237.
7. *Dīgha Nikāya* 17, *Mahāsudassana Sutta*, PTSD2 p.176, TBLD p.282.
8. Arahanta Upatissa, *Vimuttimaggā* 9, T32 1648:444, PFVM pp.226–27.
9. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra* 50:7.1, T25 1509:306a; cf. TVW5 p.1883.
10. *Samyutta Nikāya* 56:63, *Paññā Sutta*, PTSS5 p.467, CDBB p.1879; cf. *Samyutta Nikāya* 41:6, *Kāmaḥhu Sutta*, PTSS4 p.292, CDBB p.1322.
11. See also *Samyutta Nikāya* 6:1, *Āyācana Sutta*, PTSS1 p.138.
12. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra* 45:4.3, T25 1509:275c; cf. TVW4 p.1580.
13. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra* 29, T25 1509:190a, TVW2 p.819.

pānkhuri (H) *Lit.* petal; flower petal; a term used by Kabīr as a metaphor for the eye centre in a poem about finding the spiritual form of the master by first concentrating at the centre between the two eyes. The word used in the poem (*pānkhī*) has been interpreted by some scholars to mean ‘bird’, but others have regarded it as a poetic form of *pānkhuri*. The “black and white moles” is a reference to the *do dal kanwal* (two-petalled lotus or eye centre), whose two petals (energy aspects) are described as black and white:

Between the two eyes is the master,
the messenger of God.
Between the black and white moles
is the shining star.
Within the star dwells
that unknown and unseen Lord.

Between the eyes is the master,
the messenger of God.
Between the eyes shines
a tiny petal (*pānkhī*).
And within the petal (*pānkhī*)
is the hidden door (*duārā*).
Focus your telescope (*durbīn*) upon that door:
thus go easily across the world’s deadly sea.
Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 20, KSS1 p.64

A number of Vedantic and yogic texts speak of the space (*ākāsha*) within the heart (*hṛidaya*).¹ This is used in both a general sense for the spiritual ‘heart’ of a human being, as well as for the yogic practice of concentration at the heart *chakra*. An alternative term for a *chakra* is a lotus (*kamala*, *puṇḍarīka*), and it is possible that this is what Kabīr had in mind when writing this verse. The *Chhāndogya*

Upanishad, for instance, speaks of the body as the “city of *Brahman*” within which lies a small lotus, meaning the focus for one’s attention in meditation:

Here, in this city of *Brahman*, is an abode, a small lotus (*dahara punḍarīka*); within it is a small space. What is within that should be sought, for that, assuredly, is what one should desire to understand.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 8:1.1; cf. *PU* p.491

See also: **hṛidaya**.

1. *Brahma Upanishad* 3; *Taittirīya Upanishad* 1:6.1; *Subāla Upanishad* 4:1.

passage A channel or opening through which a person or a thing may pass; esoterically, the eye centre, single eye, or eye of a needle; the narrow way or strait gate that leads out of the body into the higher realms or heavens, used occasionally in Manichaeic texts, as in a psalm addressing the saviour:

Open to us the passage of the vaults of the heavens
and walk before us to the joy of your kingdom, O Glorious One.

Manichaeic Psalm Book CCXL; cf. *MEM* p.106, *MPB* p.41

The passage is mental, rather than physical, requiring a narrowing of the mind and a shedding of ego before the soul can pass through.

See also: **door, gates, strait gate** (►4).

prajñā-chakshus, paññā-cakkhu (Pa), **shes rab kyi spyan** (T), **huìyǎn, zhìhuì yǎn, zhìyǎn** (C), **chiegen** (J) *Lit.* eye (*chakshus, spyan, yǎn, gen*) of knowledge or wisdom (*paññā, shes rab, huì, zhì, chie*); the eye that sees both conditioned (*samskṛita*) and unconditioned (*asamskṛita*) things (*dharmas*) – i.e. that sees the true nature of things; the eye of omniscience that sees everything that can be known; the eye that sees the ultimate Void or Emptiness (*Shūnyatā*); the mystical insight or gnosis developed by meditation; depicted in Buddhist art as a vertical and ever-open eye upon the forehead. See **pañcha-chakshus**.

prakāśh(a) (S/H/Pu), **pargās** (Pu) *Lit.* light, clearness, brightness, splendour, glory, lustre; daylight, sunshine; manifestation, revelation, appearance, display, expansion, diffusion; elucidation, explanation (as in book titles, “Light on ...” etc.); esoterically, usually either manifestation, revelation, or inner light; from the same root as the verb *prakāśh* (to make visible, to cause to shine, to illumine, to irradiate, to show, to display, to manifest, to reveal, to impart, to proclaim).

Prakāsha and associated verb forms are used in a mystical context in the *Upanishads* and other Hindu texts. It is the Supreme who illumines the universe with His own inner light:

Pervading the entire universe, outwardly and inwardly, *Brahman* shines (*prakāshate*) of Itself, like fire permeating a red-hot iron ball.

Shankara, Ātmabodha 62; cf. ABSC p.113

Verily, I am *Brahman*, the One without a second, which is the support of all, which illumines all things, which has infinite forms, is omnipresent, devoid of multiplicity, eternal, pure, still, and absolute.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 513; cf. VCSM p.191

Just as the one sun illumines (*prakāshayati*) the entire universe, so too does the spirit illumine (*prakāshayati*) all bodies.

Bhagavad Gītā 13:33; cf. BGT

Knowing “I am that *Brahman*,” which illumines (*prakāshate*) the world of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, brings release from all shackles.

Kaivalya Upanishad 17, DKUC p.65

Likewise, the self or soul (*ātman*), which is one with *Brahman*, shines by its own light:

Just as a (lit) lamp needs no other lamp (by which to see it), so, too, does the self (*ātman*), which is wisdom itself, need no other wisdom by which to illumine (*prakāshane*) its own self (*svātman*).

Shankara, Ātmabodha 29

(The realized soul), after letting go of attachment to external and illusory happiness, being satisfied with the bliss of the *ātman*, shines (*prakāshate*) inwardly and alone, like a lamp placed in a jar.

Shankara, Ātmabodha 51; cf. ABSC pp.95–96

Later Indian *sants* (saints) have reiterated the same truths. Dādū describes existence in the higher realms of being:

All around is light (*nūr*), drink the nectar!
The taste is exquisite, relish it!
An infinite brightness (*tej anant*) is manifest:
it has no end;
The light dazzles and sparkles (*jhilmil-jhilmil*):
fix your mind in it.

In (the realm of) *sahaj* (serenity) is perennial radiance (*prakāsh*),
 the fullness of effulgent waters (*jotijal*);
 There dwells the real devotee, serving God.
 The ocean of bliss, without shore:
 there is our abode;
 The swans (*hansas*) dwell there,
 so does the servant, Dādū.

Dādū, Bānī 2, Shabd 260, DDB2 p.89; cf. in SS15 pp.136–37

The *sants* whose writings are contained in the *Ādi Granth* have likewise spoken of the light that shines within the mind and soul:

I am a sacrifice, my soul is a sacrifice,
 I am totally devoted to the true *guru*.
 Through the *guru*'s teachings, the divine light (*pargās*) has dawned:
 I sing the glorious praises of the Lord, night and day.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 110, AGK

By *guru*'s instruction divine light (*pargās*) shines
 and the mortal remains absorbed in the true Lord's love.
 Death enters not there,
 and man's light (*jotī*) blends with the supreme Light (*Jot*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 55, MMS

Now I sing the praises of the Lord within my mind.
 My mind has been illumined (*pargās*) and enlightened,
 and it is always at peace.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 671, AGK

He whose mind is wholly illumined (*pargās*):
 within that man abides the transcendent Lord.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1152, MMS

See also: **jyotis**.

radiance See **light**.

ru'yah, ru'yā (A), ru'yat (P) *Lit.* vision, sight, observation, viewing; physical sight, intellectual comprehension, mystical vision.

In the veiled language of the past, a mystical vision was often called a 'dream', and *ru'yah* is sometimes translated as such, although a mystical

vision or experience is implied. Hence, a 'dream' of God commonly implies a superconscious divine vision, rather than something experienced in a state of unconscious sleep. Such terms are found in both the Bible and the *Qur'ān*, where they often refer to the inner visions of various prophets. The situation is not straightforward, however, since mystical visions are sometimes experienced during sleep, when the mind is quiescent.

The related term, *ru'yā* (vision, dream), is used in the *Qur'ān* for the visions of Muḥammad:

Truly did God fulfil the Messenger's vision (*ru'yā*).

Qur'ān 48:27; cf. AYA

The visions of Muḥammad were said to have been of various kinds. According to a *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad's wife, 'Āyishah:

The way in which it (divine inspiration) began for the Messenger of God was truthful dreams (*al-ru'yā al-ṣāliḥah*) in his sleep. He never had a dream without it turning out to be as true and clear as bright daylight.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6:60.478; cf. HSB

The expression, *ru'yat al-qalb* (vision of the heart), refers specifically to mystical or inner vision. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj writes:

Heart-vision (*ru'yat al-qalb*) means beholding that which is hidden in the Unseen through the light of certainty (*yaqīn*). . . . 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, when asked if he saw God, replied, "How can we worship someone whom we cannot see?" Then he explained, "Eyes do not see Him in the world through direct visionary revelation (*kashf al-ʿiṣān*), but hearts (*qulūb*) see Him by means of the truths of faith. As the *Qur'ān* says, 'The heart (*fu'ād*) did not lie (in seeing) that which it saw.'"¹ Thus, 'Alī confirmed vision through the heart (*ru'yat biqalb*) (while still living) in the world. Furthermore, the Prophet said, "Worship God as if you see Him; for even if you do not see Him, He sees you."²

Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTa p.350; cf. in *SSE7* p.26

The Sufi systematizer, Rūzbihān, identifies three degrees of *ru'yah*:

Vision of the Unseen (*Ghayb*) is of three categories: the vision of heaven (*jannah*), which is at the station of meditation (*murāqabah*), the vision of the Presence (*Ḥaḍrah*), which is at the station of presential vision (*muḥāḍarah*), and the vision of God (*Ḥaqq*) Himself, which is at the station of perfect attention (*ri'āyah*).

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 9:35, *MARB* p.182, in *SSE7* p.25

Hujwīrī makes a distinction between two forms of inner vision. There is *ru'yat-i 'iyān* (actual vision), which is the vision that is natural and permanent in the heavenly realms, and *ru'yat ba-dil* (vision of heart), which sees the divine manifestations (*tajallī*) that may come and go:

The difference between vision of the heart (*ru'yat ba-dil*) and actual vision (*ru'yat-i 'iyān*) is this. Those who experience *tajallī* . . . may see at one time but not at another. On the other hand, those who experience vision (*ahl-i 'iyān*) in paradise cannot but see, even if they wish not to see; for while it is possible for *tajallī* to be hidden, *ru'yat* (vision) cannot possibly be veiled.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXIV, KMM pp.504–5; cf. KM p.389

1. *Qur'ān* 53:11.
2. Cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:2.47, 6:60.300, HSB; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1:1, 4, HSM.

samā' al-bāṭin (A) *Lit.* inward (*bāṭin*) hearing (*samā'*); the faculty of hearing at higher levels of consciousness. Summarizing al-Ghazālī, Margaret Smith explains:

There is, too, an 'inward hearing'. What is heard with the 'outward hearing' is only sound, and man shares that faculty with the rest of the animals; but by the 'inward hearing (*al-samā' al-bāṭin*)', he can hear and comprehend the spiritual meaning which lies beyond outward speech. To the man whose spiritual hearing is dulled, the song of the birds, the noise of the waves and the sighing of the wind, are mere sounds; but to that one whose spiritual hearing is alert, they are all bearing witness to the oneness of God and praising Him with eloquent tongue.¹ This inward perception, which is intuition (*al-baṣīrat al-bāṭinah*, inner sight), finds its satisfaction in what is invisible, inaudible, to the outward senses – in the things which are not temporal, but eternal.² The heart, therefore, has two gates, one opening outwards, which is that of the senses, and one opening inwards, towards the divine world, which is within the heart, and that is the gate whereby it receives inspiration and revelation.³

Margaret Smith, Al-Ghazālī the Mystic; cf. GMS p.144

1. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 2, IDC pp.218–19.
2. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Arba'īn*, KADG p.152.
3. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 3, IDC p.22; *Mīzān al-'Amal*, MAAG p.21.

samanta-cakkhu (Pa) *Lit.* all-encompassing (*samanta*) eye (*cakkhu*); the universal eye. As the All-seeing One or the Eye of the World, *Samanta-cakkhu* is commonly used as an epithet of the Buddha, referring to a *buddha*'s omniscience. See also: **pañcha-chakshus**.

sanctuary, sanctum The place of inner refuge where the faculties of the mind are stilled, and the inner being becomes deeply concentrated in the love of the divine Beloved; also called the holy of holies (L. *sancta sanctorum*), in reference to the innermost shrine in Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, where the most sacred rituals were performed; a place of inner refuge within all human beings, having nothing to do with religious belief; also called the bedchamber of the king and the bridal chamber.

François de Sales, speaking of the soul's ascent, explains the symbolism:

Solomon's temple had three courts. The first was for Gentiles and strangers wishing to have recourse to God, who came to worship in Jerusalem. The second was for the Israelites. . . . The third was for the priests and Levites. And lastly, beyond these, there was the sanctuary or inner shrine, which the high priest alone could enter once each year. . . . This sanctuary or inner shrine is an obvious symbol of this extremity and summit of our soul, this highest point of the soul.

François de Sales, Love of God 1:12; cf. LGSM pp.48–49, LGFS pp.32–33

Nikētas Stēthatos describes how a devotee, when absorbed in continuous mental prayer, attains "mindfulness" of God and enters this inner sanctuary:

Then you will walk in the path of the spirit, impervious to sensual desires, the flow of your prayer unbroken by worldly thoughts, and you will become a temple of God, praising Him undistractedly. If you pray in the mind in this way you will be granted the privilege of attaining mindfulness of God and will penetrate the innermost sanctuary of the soul (*nous*), mystically contemplating the Invisible and alone, celebrating in solitude God alone, in the unity of divine knowledge and in outpourings of love.

Theoliptos, On Inner Work, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 p.184

Other Christians have written similarly of this place of inner refuge, to which everyone has access:

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a divine centre, a speaking Voice, to which we may

continually return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto itself.

Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, TDK p.3

The sanctuary is reached through contemplation:

While man awaits his time (of death), and perseveres in all the virtues, he is able to contemplate, and to flee into God's secret sanctuary.

Jan van Ruysbroek, Spiritual Espousals 2:11; cf. SER p.111, SSJR p.81

This sanctuary is also where the soul begins to realize its essential union with the divine Being:

He is the soul of our soul; we could not form a thought or a desire without Him. Alas! what blindness is ours! We reckon ourselves alone in the interior sanctuary, when God is much more intimately present there than we are ourselves.

François Fénelon, Christian Counsel 15, SPID p.89

When the mind is under control, the inner darkness of this sanctuary is realized to be light:

Enlighten me, good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and banish all darkness from the sanctuary of my heart. Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and remove the temptations that beset me with such violence.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 3:23; cf. ICCB p.71, ICTK p.125

It is a place of mental purity:

One should pray with all one's fervour, with one's soul and mind and heart, with the fear of God, and with all one's strength. Mental prayer does not allow either distractions or foul thoughts to enter the inner sanctum.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 7, OPJ p.55

Interpreting the biblical *Song of Songs* ("The king has brought me into his chamber"), Nikētas Stēthatos describes how the soul gains understanding of inner realities, of how the created universe is put together:

Once the bridegroom has led the soul into the sanctuary of his hidden mysteries, he will initiate it with Wisdom (*Sophia*) into the contemplation of the inner essences of created things.

Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Inner Nature of Things 49, Philokalia, PCT4 p.120

The early fathers regarded negative thoughts as the incursions of demons. However they may be understood, Stēthatos recommends continuous prayer as the way to repulse them. Then they are unable to “invade your inner sanctuary”:

But if, with the eye of your mind (*nous*) vigilant, you devote yourself to the spiritual work of prayer and to contemplation of the inner essences of God’s creation, you will not be frightened by their “arrow that flies by day”,¹ nor will they be able to invade your inner sanctuary; for like darkness they will be repulsed by the light that is in you and consumed in divine fire.

Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Practice of the Virtues 94, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 p.104

See also: **bridal chamber** (7.2), **eye centre**, **holy of holies** (2.1), **single eye**.

1. *Psalms* 91:5.

sha'arei kedushah, sha'ar (He) (pl. *sha'arim*) *Lit.* gate (*sha'ar*); gates of (*sha'arei*) holiness (*kedushah*); the gate or opening through which the attention ascends to the spiritual or holy realms; the passage between bodily existence and the heavenly realms; the place where the consciousness collects as it is withdrawn from the body and senses, and from where it ascends to the inner regions; also, the point from where the soul leaves the body at the time of death; also, the various levels or *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities through which the hidden *Ayn-Sof* is manifested in creation) that must be traversed on the inner journey.

According to the medieval *Zohar*, the primary work of the Kabbalah, the *sefirot* are like “gates”, doors or levels that must be entered in order to gain knowledge of God; those who desire to meet the divine King must enter by means of these “gates”:

It is like an exalted king, who is high, hidden and concealed, and who has made gates (*sha'arim*) for himself, one upon the other, and at the end of all the gates (*sha'arim*), he has made one particular gate (*sha'ar*) (*i.e. Malkut, Shekhinah*) with a number of locks, a number of doors, and a number of palaces. He says: “Whoever desires to enter into My presence, this gate (*sha'ar*) shall be the first (that leads) to Me; and whoever enters by this gate (*sha'ar*) shall enter.”

Zohar 1:7b, WZ1 p.400

Following a common method of Jewish exegesis, in this case having taken a line out of its context in a poem from *Proverbs* that concerns the virtues of a perfect wife, the *Zohar* then goes on to explain the meaning of “gates” in a verse from the *Psalms*:

Rabbi Simeon said: “Her husband is known in the gates (*sha’arim*).”¹ What are these gates (*sha’arim*)? It is similar to the verse, “Lift up your heads, gates (*sha’arim*); and be lifted up, everlasting doors (*pit hei ‘olam*),”² for through these gates (*sha’arim*), which are the higher levels, the Holy One, blessed be He, is known, and in no other way is it possible to cleave to Him.

Come and see. Man’s soul can be known only through the organs of the body, which are the levels that perform the work of the soul. Consequently, it is both known and unknown. In the same way, the Holy One, blessed be He, is both known and unknown, because He is the soul’s soul, the spirit’s spirit, hidden and concealed from all. But through these gates (*sha’arim*), which are the doors of the soul (*pitahim neshamah*), the Holy One, blessed be He, may be known.

Come and see. The door (*petah*) has a door (*petah*), and the level (*darga*) has a level (*darga*), and through them the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, is known.

Zohar 1:103b, WZL p.400

Sha’arei Kedushah is also the name of a kabbalistic work by Rabbi Hayyim Vital (C16th), in which he explains the teachings of his master, Rabbi Isaac Luria. In this book Vital describes how a devotee can create an appropriate external and internal environment to receive the “spirit of prophecy (*ruah ha-nevu’ah*)”. The book was written particularly for those who have become lost or confused on their path to the Divine.

See also: **gates, sha’arei ‘olam.**

1. *Proverbs* 31:23.
2. *Psalms* 24:7.

sha’arei ‘olam (He) *Lit.* gates of (*sha’arei*) the eternal (*‘olam*); the gates of eternity; the eternal or everlasting gates; externally, the gates to the Temple at Jerusalem; esoterically, the inner gateway through which an influx of the divine power can flood into a soul and which consequently leads the soul out of the body into the spiritual realms; interpreted in the thirteenth-century *Zohar* as the various levels or *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities by which the hidden Godhead is revealed) that are traversed on the inner journey;¹ the inner ‘gateways’ through which the soul passes as it crosses from one heavenly realm to another.

‘Olam means cosmos, world or realm, in the sense of both time and space, but it is often used to mean eternity. By implication, the *sha’arei ‘olam* are hence the gates to eternal life, as in a frequently quoted use of the term:

Lift up your heads, O gates (*sha'arim*)!
Lift them up, O everlasting doors (*pit 'hei 'olam*),
and the King of Glory shall come in.

Psalms 24:7, JCL

Although commonly translated as 'everlasting doors', *sha'arei 'olam* could also mean 'doors to the eternal realm'. Thus, as another translator has it:

O gates (*sha'arim*), lift up your heads!
Be lifted up, openings of eternity (*pit 'hei 'olam*),
so the King of Glory may come!

Psalms 24:7, in ZBEM p.67

In this rendering, the psalmist is expressing his yearning for the veils between himself and God to be lifted.

Discussing the symbolic meaning of the gates to the Temple, Isaac of Akko explains that they refer spiritually to the entry point within oneself to realms of higher consciousness, and the place through which the flow of the divine Consciousness can pour into the meditator. Repentance, he says, means to turn the attention in meditation from the material realms to the spiritual:

(A person) should repent by withdrawing his soul from the physical (*murgashot*), and by immersing (his soul) in the spiritual (*muskalot*), while in his house of seclusion/meditation (*hitbodedut*). . . . "Thus said the Lord God: the gate (*sha'ar*) of the inner court which faces east shall be closed on the six working days (and on the Sabbath day it shall be opened)."² All of these (gates) allude to the gates of repentance (*sha'arei teshuvah*) and their (spiritual) outflow, which open to the *perushim ha-mitbodedim* (the ascetic meditators). (All this comes about through) the subjugation of the appetitive (desiring, lower) soul before the spiritual soul (*nefesh ha-maskel*). . . . (For) the divine Consciousness (*Sekhel elohi*) had been anxious over its separation from the spiritual (*muskalot*) and its immersion in the physical (*murgashot*).

Isaac of Akko, Oẓar Ḥayyim, OHIA fol.2b; cf. in LBDF pp.260–61

In other words, by repentance (*teshuvah*), by ascetic living, and by raising the consciousness in meditation (*hitbodedut*), the practitioner will experience the opening of the "gates", such that the divine power will flow into him. For, he adds, the "divine Consciousness", the divine source of life in a human being, has felt the pain of its separation from the spiritual dimension due to the soul's attachment to the physical world.

There is a traditional belief that God created the universe in fifty stages or gates of understanding through which the soul must pass on the spiritual

ascent. These gates are understood to correspond to the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, which is mentioned exactly fifty times in the Bible:³

The fifty gates relate to the ascending spiritual levels within the world through which man must pass in order to uncover the inner secrets of creation and in order to comprehend the powers, capabilities, and life forces within. In a sense, the fifty *sha'arei binah* (gates of understanding) signify how far removed man is from God's wisdom. It is incumbent upon man to pass through these gates of understanding in a journey to uncover the Divine wisdom hidden in the words of *Torah*.

Osher Chaim Levene and Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman, "Counting the Omer," COLA

See also: **gates, sha'arei kedushah.**

1. *Zohar* 1:7b, 103b, WZI p.400.
2. *Ezekiel* 46:1.
3. See Vilna Gaon, *Aderes Eliyahu, Balak*, in *COLA*.

shénguāng (C) *Lit.* spiritual (*shén*) light (*guāng*); mystically, the spiritual light that automatically emanates from one who has realized the *Dào*.

According to Daoism, when human beings were first created, their original essence was pure and natural, one with the *Dào*. In that state, they were naturally radiant (*shénguāng*). Over time, however, they allowed baser desires to override the higher enjoyment of living in the *Dào*.

Master Qiū Chǔjī (C13th) relates a legend concerning the ready availability of fragrant mushrooms to illustrate how the human mind falls victim to sense pleasures, which results in the dimming and eventual eclipse of the inherent spiritual light:

When people were first created, (their) spiritual light (*shénguāng*) shone naturally, and they went about walking as though they were flying (*fēi*). The earth produced mushrooms (*jùn*) that already possessed such an excellent flavour that they required no cooking, and people ate them just as they were. The mushrooms were fragrant, and (peoples') noses smelled the fragrance and their mouths enjoyed the flavour. This gradually brought about heaviness (*zhòng*) in their bodies, and their spiritual light (*shénguāng*) was extinguished (*miè*) soon after, because of the depth of their wants (*ài*) and desires (*yù*).

Qiū Chǔjī, Xuánfēng qīnghuì lù, DZ176 1a–b; cf. in TPEQ pp.117–18

Fortunately, spiritual masters teach a method whereby this inherent *shénguāng* (spiritual light) may be rediscovered:

Sweep clean the boundaries of the mind (*xīn*), so there is no more earthly dust (*chén*). Seek only the light of the spirit (*shénguāng*), and constantly support and protect it.

Making this (teaching) known protects (*shǒu*) the minds of people. By making it known, their minds will be protected – immediately and without fail. Then, while in their mortal body (*fánshēn*), they will obtain an immortal body (*dàoshēn*, *Dào* body).

Xiāozāi hùnmìng miàojīng, DZ19, ZHO

shénmíng (C) *Lit.* spiritual (*shén*) light (*míng*); spiritual illumination, divine radiance, divine light; hence, by extension, gods or divinities, those who embody *shénmíng*.

In his commentary on the *Yijing*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains that inner light appears in the emptiness that remains when the ego is eliminated from one’s being:

If you refine the self until there is no self, white light appears in the empty space; this spiritual light (*shénmíng*) arises naturally.

Liú Yīmíng, Zhōuyì (5) chǎnzhen, ZW245, DS13

The *Book of the Masters of Huáinán*, the *Huáinánzǐ* (C2nd BCE), also says that “spiritual light (*shénmíng*)” appears when the mind is still and empty:

Stillness and detachment is the house of spiritual light (*shénmíng*).
Void and emptiness is the home of *Dào*.

Huáinánzǐ 7, DZ1184

Whether it is called divine light, spiritual radiance or by some other name, *shénmíng* is not a physical light perceptible to the ordinary senses. It is experienced only by one who has become aware of it after inner purification and transformation. The *Huáinánzǐ* also says that although the *Dào* may be an ocean of light, it is nonetheless a ‘jealous’ light, in the sense that it is only visible to a pure mind:

As expansive and vast as it is, the *Dào* of heaven and earth still treasures its spiritual light (*shénmíng*) and restrains its radiance.

Huáinánzǐ 7, DZ1184

The process leading to the experience of the inner light may be described in different ways, but the essential practice is for the wayward mind to be calmed, refined, and brought into balance. This is accomplished by means of meditation, through which a practitioner controls the emotions, and eliminates mental obstacles, desires, biases, and attachment to external phenomena:

A mind that becomes neither distressed nor elated is the ultimate goodness. A mind that is unobstructed and yet unchanging is ultimate stillness. A mind that is not burdened by habits or desires is ultimate emptiness. A mind that neither likes nor dislikes is ultimate balance. A mind that is not scattered by things is ultimate purity.

Those who attain these five things have unobstructed spiritual light (*shénmíng*). Those who have unobstructed spiritual light (*shénmíng*) have inner attainment.

Huáinánzǐ 1, DZ1184

The result is that:

When its foundation is pure (*qīng*), the mind is not disturbed by external things. Then passions are stilled and spiritual light (*shénmíng*) appears.

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 8a

In the early stages – though the spiritual light is always present – awareness or perception of it may not be clear or continuous:

Flickering softly, like an image between dream and waking, the spirit light (*shénmíng*) suddenly appears and vanishes.

Xīshēng jīng 12, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 3:8b, TMPS p.243

The *Scripture on Inner Contemplation* (c.C8th), ascribing its words to Lǎozǐ, assures the practitioner that the spiritual light of the *Dào* will take up residence in a mind that remains calm and pure; and this “spiritual light (*shénmíng*) suffuses the entire self”:

For someone who is able to keep the mind always pure and still (*qīngjìng*), the *Dào* will automatically come to stay. When the *Dào* automatically comes to stay, spiritual light (*shénmíng*) will suffuse the entire self. When spiritual light (*shénmíng*) suffuses the self, (spiritual) life (*shēng*) will not perish.

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 5a; cf. TMLT p.215

In ‘The Far-off Journey’, a well-known poem attributed to Qū Yuán (C3rd BCE), the poet describes a visionary experience in the realms of the gods and immortals – a spiritual journey that he had unexpectedly experienced while lying in bed one night, unable to sleep. In symbolic language, he indicates something of the spiritual practice that led to this experience:

I eat the six energies (*liùqì*)
 and drink the nightly dew,
 Rinse my mouth with pure *yáng* (light)
 and swallow morning light.
 Guarding the purity of the spirit light (*shénmíng*) within,
 I absorb vital essence (*jīng*) and life energy (*qì*),
 and drive out all that is coarse.

Qū Yuán, "Yuǎnyóu," in Chǔcí; cf. TEAK p.253

The “six energies” are the heavenly energies that in ancient China were understood to influence, in various ways, the five aspects of earthly energy (*wǔxíng*, the five phases or elements). In Daoism, maintenance of physical health is considered significant; and through diet and exercise students strive to be in complete alignment with the six energies.

Dew is water vapour that condenses at night. In dry climates especially, it is drunk by various creatures, and is an essential means by which water is introduced into plants and into the food cycle. In ancient times, it was thought to appear magically overnight and to possess mysterious and auspicious qualities. It was therefore collected and drunk for its perceived mystical value. In Daoism, dew symbolizes the sustenance derived from the process of spiritual transformation or regeneration by means of inner alchemy (*i.e.* meditation). To “rinse my mouth with pure *yáng* and swallow morning light” means to be immersed in and to embrace the spiritual light. Qū Yuán is referring symbolically to the spiritual light and bliss that he derives from his nightly meditation. At the end of the extract, he refers to the Daoist process of inner alchemy: the refining and transmuting of vital essence (*jīng*) into subtle life energy (*qì*), and thence into pure spirit (*shén*).

In this stage of attainment, the inner spiritual light remains steady and constant; vital essence and life energy return to their original state; and the inner spiritual faculties of seeing and hearing become sharp and clear:

When the spiritual light (*shénmíng*) is concealed within the formless and the essence of spirit has reverted to the ultimate Truth, then the eyes are bright, but not for looking; the ears are keen, but not for listening; the mind is open and unobstructed, but not for thinking.

Huáinánzǐ 8, DZ1184

See also: **shénmíng** (►1).

shēnwài shēn, shēnwài yǒushēn (C) *Lit.* body (*shēn*) beyond (*wài*) the body (*shēn*); body existing (*yǒu*) beyond the body; ‘embodiment’ or existence

beyond the body; in Daoism, the subtle ‘embodiment’ of the spirit that transcends physical death and functions in the celestial realms; experienced through deep meditation.

By cultivating and realizing the spiritual ‘body’ or essence beyond the physical body, it is possible to transcend the material world and enter the spiritual realms, a process described as transformation of the spiritual “embryo”, *i.e.* the growth and development of one’s inherent spiritual nature and potential:

Lǐ Qīng’ān (Lǐ Dàochún, C13th) says, “Embodiment existing beyond the body (*shēnwài yǒushēn*) is called transformation of the (spiritual) embryo (*tuōtāi*).”¹

He also said, “When the *yáng* spirit (*yángshén*) emerges from the covering (*qiào*), it is called transformation of the (spiritual) embryo (*tuōtāi*).”

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Once free, the *shēnwài shēn* transcends the mundane and reaches the “highest heaven”. “Where the body is created in the house of the creative” is an obscure phrase, which, in the context, seems to refer to the creation of the *shēnwài yǒushēn* – to the ‘embodiment’ or manifestation of the spirit in the spiritual realms:

The *Léngyán jīng*² says: “With pure thought, one can fly (*fēi*), and will certainly be born in the highest heaven (*tiānshàng*).”

Heaven is not the wide blue sky, but the place where the body (*shēn*) is created in the house of the creative (*qiángōng*). Over time, there develops quite naturally a body that exists outside the body (*shēnwài yǒushēn*).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 1, JY161; cf. SGFO

In this context, ‘heaven’ refers to the spiritual realm within.

See also: **yángshén** (8.1), **yīlíng** (8.1), **zhēnxìng** (8.1).

1. See also Lǐ Dàochún, *Zhōnghé jí*, DZ249, JY226.

2. A Chinese translation of the Buddhist *Shūrangama Sūtra*.

shiva-netra, shivāsthanā, rudrāksha (S), **Shiv netar, Shiv netra** (H/Pu) *Lit.* the eye (*netra, aksha*) of *Shiva*, also known as *Rudra*; the place or seat (*āsthāna*) of *Shiva*; the all-seeing eye of *Shiva*; also, the third eye through which a devotee passes into the inner regions.

According to traditional mythology, especially in the *Shiva Purāṇa*, *Shiva* is depicted as *trilochana*, *trinetra*, or *tryambaka* (three-eyed).¹ According to the story, his third eye burst out upon his forehead with a great flame when his wife playfully placed her hands over his eyes, thereby plunging the universe into darkness.² According to the *Shiva Purāṇa*, “The third eye became the beautiful ornament on his forehead.”³ Many other verses also speak of the “eye in the forehead”.⁴

Shiva’s third eye is a source of great power. By its means, *Shiva* reduced *Kāma* (the god of love) to ashes for trying to tempt him, although *Shiva* later restored him again to a body similar to the one that he had had before.⁵ Much of the time, *Shiva*’s third eye remains closed, but *Shiva* is the god of destruction in the Hindu trinity – the other two deities being *Brahmā* (the creator) and *Vishṇu* (the preserver) – and at the time of periodic dissolution of the universe, it is fire emanating from the eye in *Shiva*’s forehead that is said to bring about the destruction,⁶ followed after a period of quiescence, by a re-creation. *Shiva* also says, “For the protection of a devotee of mine, I burnt the God of death (*Kāl*) in the fire emerging from my eyes,”⁷ and, “I am the three-eyed god who bestows happiness, but brought about the misery of Gautama. I especially curse those wicked persons who harass my devotees.”⁸

Shiva is portrayed as a great ascetic and the first yogi, regarded as the patron deity of *yoga* and yogis. He is commonly depicted as being seated in the lotus posture, the crescent moon as his crown, with matted hair, a third eye, ten arms, a pale-complexioned body dusted with ashes, clad in elephant and tiger skins, serpents around his neck and body, the source of continual blessings, and so on.⁹

Hindu iconography typically portrays *Shiva* with the single eye on the forehead. This all-seeing eye of the god reflects reality. When an individual’s inner eye is opened, and he rises to higher levels of consciousness, then everything concerning the worlds that lie below, including this world, past and future, is revealed to the attention or consciousness of the soul, should he wish to take account of it. He also has power over things that happen in the lower worlds. The eye is one of consciousness, and bears no resemblance to the physical eye. Interpreting the term in this way, yogic texts point out that when the mind focuses at this point, it becomes tranquil:

The seat of *Shiva* (*shivāsthanā*) is between the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*) where the mind becomes absorbed. That state (*tatpada*) is known as the fourth (*turya*). Death (*kāla*) has no access there.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:47; cf. HYP p.54

With constant practice, the apparent darkness within is replaced by spiritual light:

When the *yogī* constantly focuses upon the eye of *Shiva* (*rudrāksha*), in the middle of his forehead, then he perceives a fire, brilliant like lightning. By contemplating on this light, all sins are destroyed, and even the most wicked person attains the highest goal.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:45; cf. *SSV* p.60

See also: **bhruvoḥ-madhya, divya-chakshus, tīsar nayan.**

1. See *Shiva Purāṇa, Vidyeshvara Saṃhitā* 4:42–43, 5.51, 14.57–59, 20.52, 24.113–14, *Rudra Saṃhitā* 1:6.25, 9.2, 13.47–53, 19.2, 2:15.50, 38.22, 34, 41.40, 3:43.59–61, *passim*, *SPS1* pp.18, 23, 101, 141, 163, 196, 209, 234, 266, 340, 447–48, 464, *SPS2* p.655.
2. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 5:42.16–18, *SPS2* p.980.
3. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 3:39.38; cf. *SPS2* p.637.
4. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 5:13.41, 49–50, 14.2, 4, *SPS2* pp.861–63, *passim*.
5. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 2:3.60–78, 9.1–63, 3:9.32–33, 18.1–45, 19.1–52, 20.1–2, 21.1–27, 24.1–2, 51.1–43, *SPS1* pp.286–88, 309–14, *SPS2* pp.509, 540–52, 564–65, 690–94.
6. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 3:19.14–15, 3:23.36, 5:13.49–50, *SPS2* pp.545, 563, 862, *passim*.
7. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 2:23.42, *SPS1* p.382.
8. *Shiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṃhitā* 3:24.69–70, *SPS2* p.570.
9. E.g. *Shiva Purāṇa, Vidyeshvara Saṃhitā* 17:38–42, *Rudra Saṃhitā* 1:9.2, 13.47–53, *passim*, *SPS1* pp.109, 209, 234–35.

shyām shvet, shyām set, syām set, shām set, shām swet (H) *Lit.* black (*shyām*) and white (*shvet*); the *āgyā* or *ājñā chakra* or eye centre whose two petals are black and white; the two-petalled lotus behind the eyes; from the Sanskrit *shyāma* and *shveta*. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes of the repetition of names by which concentration is focused at this centre:

Repeat the five names (*pāñch nām*),
and concentrate your soul in the black and white (*shyām set*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:4.156, *SBP* p.222

The black and white ‘colour’ ascribed to these two petals perhaps relates to this centre as a confluence of the two currents (*nāḍīs*) of *iḍā* and *pingalā*. One current travels up and the other one down. It is also said in some yogic literature that each of these two petals is comprised of forty-eight petals or divisions, this being the number of petals on the five lower *chakras*. Thus, like white light, all the ‘frequencies’ together make up white or black.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh was a disciple of Tulsī Sāhib, who also uses this term for the eye centre. To take refuge in the master, says Tulsī Sāhib in a verse addressed to his disciple Hirday, means to become absorbed in the radiant form of the master (his “feet”) at the eye centre, at the “junction of black and white”. This is the “chamber” in the mansion of the body that is set apart for rest and refuge from the world:

Whosoever takes shelter at the master’s feet,
there does his attention become firmly fixed.
I shall now tell you the saving quality of the saints’ feet:
listen, O Hirday, I shall reveal this secret to you.

The luminous feet lie at the junction of black and white (*syām set*) –
O Hirday, I shall show you the way to reach them.
The soul makes its dwelling at the lotus feet of saints,
enjoying their radiance, she remains absorbed in them.
A mansion has courtyards and staterooms,
but the chamber meant for rest is apart.
Those who fix their attention there uninterruptedly,
become free from the bondage of mind and desire.

Tulsī Sāhib, Ratn Sāgar, RSTS p.9; cf. TSSH p.64

See also: **ājñā chakra** (5.1), **do-dala kamala**, **eye centre**.

single eye The ‘headquarters’ or point of focus of the mind and soul in a human being, slightly above and between the two physical eyes, though having no actual physical location, but lying in a more subtle mental plane; the thinking centre; also called the eye centre and the third eye; sometimes understood as the eye of the soul. It is at this point that the soul and mind, experienced humanly as the attention, can be concentrated, thereby withdrawing all consciousness from the body below the eyes. Subsequently, the soul and mind go further within, passing through the gates of death while still living in the physical body.

The term is derived from one of the sayings of Jesus preserved in *Matthew*:

The light of the body is the eye:
if therefore your eye is single,
your whole body will be full of light.
But if your eye is evil,
your whole body will be full of darkness.
If therefore the light that is in you is darkness,
how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:22–23; cf. KJV

The saying means that if a person becomes single-minded or one pointed, with their attention fully fixed at the centre behind the eyes, then their entire being will be filled with the inner light so much so that even their body will seem to be “full of light”.

If, on the other hand, their mind is full of evil, negative or worldly thoughts, then their mind will be ‘legion’, scattered in a million directions in the world, and they will see only darkness inside. And if a soul, being made of the light of God, experiences nothing but darkness, then the real extent of that darkness can be imagined.

The saying has been variously translated and interpreted in the different versions of the New Testament. Some translations have suggested, “if therefore your eye is sound”.¹ Other translations have it as “healthy”,² “good”,³ “clear”,⁴ “in one piece”,⁵ and so on, none of which really capture the meaning supported by the context, which clearly contrasts a non-physical, spiritual light with the darkness within. The Greek word used is *haplous* (simple, single, uncomplicated, one-pointed), hence also, plain, straightforward, open, frank, *etc.* The converse is *diplous* (twofold, two-sided; hence, duplicitous).

Christian writers have generally interpreted the single eye to mean single or one-pointed attention towards the Divine. Jan van Ruysbroek (c. 1293–1381) calls it the “single intention” of the soul towards God.⁶ A similar meaning is expressed by his contemporary Johann Tauler, for whom it is a favourite expression. He says: “There be few left who wholly love God and have a single eye to His glory;”⁷ and likewise:⁸

He who would be a son of our Father in heaven must be a stranger among the children of this world, and separate himself from them, and must have an earnest mind and a single eye, with a heart inclined towards God.

Johann Tauler, Sermons 4, HLT p.223

Gregory of Nyssa, however, understands the “single eye” to be the soul’s innate faculty of vision:

Sharp-eyed and clear-sighted is the man who looks only to the Good with the single eye of his soul.

Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 8, PG44 cols.949c ff., GGG p.220

Jan van Ruysbroek also understands the single eye to refer to the soul’s spiritual vision. Speaking of souls that see the inner light, beyond the operation of thought and reason, he writes:

Then the pure and single eye is strengthened by the inpouring of that clear light of the Father and they behold His face in a simple seeing,

beyond reason and without thinking. This light and this vision give to the contemplating spirit a conscious certainty that she sees God, so far as man may see Him in this mortal life.

Jan van Ruysbroek, Book of the Twelve Beguines 11; cf. BTB pp.82–83

And he adds that it is by means of this spiritual “eye” that God Himself is seen:

The pure and single eye of the soul, uplifted, beyond and without reason, in a bare and simple vision, always sees the face of the Father, as do the angels who are our ministers;⁹ for it has before it no other image than that of God Himself.

Jan van Ruysbroek, Book of the Twelve Beguines 12; cf. BTB p.86

Christian literature contains many such references to the soul’s faculty of inner vision, where it is variously called the eyes of the mind, the eyes of the soul, spiritual eyes, and so on. In fact, mystics of all times and cultures have described the experience of seeing a spiritual light within the focus behind the eyes, which has brought them great peace, bliss, and understanding.

The various interpretations highlight the fact that although contemplative prayer has always been regarded as the means of union with God, the techniques of prayer actually taught by Jesus to his disciples were never clearly recorded.

See also: **eye centre, eye of a needle, eyes of the soul.**

1. *Revised Standard Version.*
2. *New Revised Standard Version.*
3. *New International Version.*
4. *New Jerusalem Bible.*
5. *The Unvarnished Gospel, UGAG.*
6. *E.g. Jan van Ruysbroek, Spiritual Espousals 2:28, SER p.149.*
7. *Johann Tauler, Sermons 1, HLT p.201.*
8. *See also Johann Tauler, Life 3, Sermons 9, 15, HLT pp.52, 263, 316.*
9. *Cf. Matthew 18:10.*

sitārah-ʾi ṣubḥ (P), kawkab al-ṣubḥ (A) *Lit.* morning (ṣubḥ) star (sitārah, kawkab); the first manifestation of inner light as the seeker begins his inner journey:

Among all the inner manifestations, the morning star (*kawkab al-ṣubḥ*) is the first light that appears.

Shāh Nīʿmat Allāh Valī, Rasāʾil, RNV4 p.47; cf. in SSE4 p.70

Ṣubḥ (morning) by itself is also used as a metaphor for the dawning of the inner light, and the start of the inner ascent.

See also: **ṣubḥah**.

spiritual eyes See **eyes of the soul**.

spiritual senses Subtle faculties of the mind and soul, especially those of seeing and hearing, which are awakened on the inner planes of consciousness. According to the *Macarian Homilies* (C4th):

This is a thing that everyone should know, that there are eyes that are more inward than these eyes, and hearing more inward than this hearing.

Macarian Homilies 28:5; cf. *SHME* p.216

The expression is also used by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa¹ and others,² with a more metaphorical meaning. By spiritual senses, Origen refers to the immaterial faculties of the mind and soul that are able to distinguish good from bad, are able to know both the Word and God, and enable a soul to live in tune with His will. It is in this sense that he interprets Jesus' saying in *Matthew*: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He gives a similar interpretation to a line from *Proverbs*, "and you will find a divine sense",³ and a verse in *Hebrews*, concerning those "who through practice have trained their minds to distinguish good from evil".⁴

See also: **ears of the soul**, **eyes of the soul**.

1. *E.g.* Gregory of Nyssa, *On Canticles* 1, *GGG* pp.156–57.
2. *E.g.* Isaac of Nineveh, *Treatises* 68, 74, *MTIN* pp.318, 345.
3. *Matthew* 5:8, *KJV*; *Proverbs* 2:5, *LXX*; in *e.g.* Origen, *On First Principles* 1:1.9.
4. *Hebrews* 5:14; in *e.g.* Origen, *Against Celsus* 6:13; see also Andrew Louth, *OCM* pp.67–70.

spiritual vision, spiritual sight See **inner vision**.

ṣubḥah (A), **ṣubḥ**, **ṣubḥat** (P) *Lit.* dawn, daybreak, morning; also, the early morning Muslim prayer, said before sunrise; from the same root as *ṣabūḥī* (morning cup, morning draught, morning wine); in Sufi imagery, the dawning

of the divine light within, clearing away the veils of spiritual darkness that obscure the vision of the beloved.

Abū Saʿīd describes the lifting of these veils as the shining of the light of dawn:

The clouds of separation have been cleared away from the moon of love, and the light of dawn (*ṣubḥ*) has shone forth from the darkness of the Unseen.

Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, in Kashf al-Maḥjūb XIV:9, KMM p.322; cf. KM p.250

Ḥāfiẓ compares the beloved to the “dawn” whose light far surpasses that of his own dim “candle”:

You are like the dawn (*ṣubḥ*),
I like a bedroom candle in the morning.
Smile upon me, and see how I surrender my soul.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.171, DIH p.295; cf. DHWC (378:1) p.652

Rūmī says that when light appears within the soul, it “bursts out” with joy:

When that blissful dawn (*ṣubḥ-i saʿādat*) comes spreading its light,
the rooster of the soul bursts out crowing.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 619:6473, KSD2 p.50, in SSE4 p.71

The first dawning of inner light seen by the awakening soul is sometimes called the *sitārah-i ʿi ṣubḥ* or the *kawkab-i ṣubḥ*, both meaning ‘morning star’:

This star (*sitārah*) is the guide of the companions:
it shines at the crack of dawn (*ṣubḥ*), and is the beloved.

Shāh Nūrmat Allāh Valī, Rasāʿil, RNV4 p.48, in SSE4 p.70

At the end of the spiritual journey, the light of the divine Essence itself is sometimes called the *ṣubḥ-i azal* (pre-eternal dawn), the inner dawning or realization of the uncreated Light:

What then is the dawn (*ṣubḥ*) of luminous manifestation?
That pre-eternal dawn (*ṣubḥ-i azal*)
is the level of the Essence of the One.

What is that light of the One,
of the pre-eternal dawn (*ṣubḥ-i azal*)?
It is the First and the Inward, and is everlasting.

ʿAlī Shāh Kirmānī, in FNI15 p.143; cf. in SSE15 pp.132–33

sūī duār, sūī ke dār, sūī agra dvār (H) *Lit.* door (*duār*) of (*ke*) the needle (*sūī*); tip (*agra*) passage (*dvār*) of the needle (*sūī*); the eye of the needle; also as *agra nakh* (tip of the needle); esoterically, the third eye or eye centre in the forehead behind the eyes; the point of concentration where the mind and soul can leave the body. As Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes:

Reverse your attention, dwell within, and penetrate the eye of the needle (*sūī ke duār*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:4.3, SBP p.156

And:

When I began to peep through the eye of the needle (*sūī duār*),
countless sins were destroyed.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 34:3.10, SBP p.282

The term echoes Jesus' familiar saying.¹ In fact, the nineteenth-century *sant* (saint) Tulsī Sāhib, the *guru* of Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, clearly alludes to the saying of Jesus, at the same time pointing out its mystic significance. The inverted tree is the *Ashvattha* tree of Hindu mythology – a symbol of creation, with its roots in heaven, taking their sustenance, and its branches forming creation:

There is a Tree that stands upside down,
not for a moment is it upright.
Within it lies a hidden path,
ever present from dawn till dusk.
Upon it can be seen the eye of a needle (*sūī duār*),
with camels passing through.

Tulsī Sāhib, Ratn Sāgar, Rekhtā, RSTS p.162

In Tulsī Sāhib's poem, unlike Jesus' saying, the "camels" are passing through the eye of the needle. Presumably, they signify the souls of human beings that are pure enough to pass through with the help of a master into the higher heavens, though still impure enough to be called "camels".

Dariyā Sāhib uses the same term and the same imagery of the inverted "Tree". Referring to various yogic practices, he writes:

I shall disclose the secret of the *sushumṇā*,
and shall tell you of the place of nectar.
I shall explain to you the path leading to the Tree
with its roots above and branches below.
This is the true technique (*jukti*) of *yoga* (*jog*),
the secrets of which are explained by the *satguru*, says Dariyā.

It enables the soul to enter the inner realms
by letting it pass through the eye of the needle (*sūī agra dvār*).
Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī 1, Shabd 8:17, DG1 p.111; cf. DSSK p.201

It is here that the soul comes into contact with the inner light and sound:

When the mind becomes still, devotion is intensified:
then contact is made with the true Sound. . . .
When the soul enters within through the eye of the needle (*agra nakh*),
then the seeing and hearing faculties automatically perceive within.
Filled with true love on seeing the unwritten Name,
darkness is destroyed, and a rain of nectar falls from the sky.
Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī 2, Shabd 926–30, DG2 pp.93–94; cf. DSSK p.167

See also: **eye of a needle**.

1. *Matthew* 19:24.

surat (H/Pu) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection, memory; attention, consciousness; used by Indian mystics with two meanings: firstly, the eternal essence of a human being, the soul, which is a drop of the Supreme, and secondly, for the soul's power to hear the divine sound of the Word (*Shabd*) within; of uncertain derivation, but probably from *shruti* (S. hearing, the ear), since soul, attention, consciousness and memory are all related to the faculty of inner hearing.

Although the common Hindi term for the soul is *ātmā* or *ātman*, *surat* has been used by a few mystics, such as Kabīr,¹ Dariyā Sāhib,² Swami Shiv Dayal Singh,³ and others. It also appears in the *Ādi Granth*.⁴

Using the term for both the immortal soul as well as for the inner faculty that hears the music of the Word or *Shabd*, Guru Nānak writes:

The Word (*Sabad*) is the *guru*,
and the *surat* attuned to the *Dhun* (Melody) is the disciple.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 943, AGG

The soul has two faculties: the hearing faculty (*surat*) and the seeing faculty (*nirat*). When the soul goes within, it hears the melody of the Sound through the *surat*, and sees the light of the heavenly regions and all visions there, through *nirat*. Ultimately, the two faculties merge into one, when the soul merges fully into the sound. Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990) explains this process:

When by the grace of a true master we are brought into the magnetic field of the Word or *Logos*, it pulls us toward itself and draws us

upward to the Lord. With the help of its sound we must find the direction of our true home, and with the help of its light we are to follow the path to it. The soul's power of seeing is called *nirat*, and its power of hearing is called *surat*. *Surat* hears the sound of the Word and *nirat* sees its radiance.

For example, if we take a walk at night and lose our way in the darkness, we stand perfectly still and listen to see if we can hear any sound coming from the direction of our house. It may be the barking of a dog or the sound of a radio or any other sound. With the help of this sound we are able to determine the direction of our house, but we then need a light of some kind to show the way and help us to avoid thorny bushes, uneven ground, and other hazards.

Saints tell us that the Lord has provided both sound and light in each one of us to enable us to reach His mansion. With the sound we are to determine the direction and with the light we complete our spiritual journey home.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Path, TPCS pp.65–66

Writing to his successor-to-be (Maharaj Sawan Singh), Baba Jaimal Singh (1839–1903) says:

Keep the attentive faculties of *surat* and *nirat*, and the mind's inherent sense of longing, alert to the *Shabd Dhun* (melody of the Word). If day and night the longing to hear the *Shabd Dhun* is there, then even during work the mind will remain unsoiled. Then whenever you are free, the thought of meditation alone will arise in the mind. Whether through sheer determination or with love, you must listen to the *Shabd Dhun* every day. This time will never come again. So do your meditation daily – not a day is to be missed.

Baba Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters 81, SL p.126

See also: **nirat**, **surat** (5.1), **surat Shabd** (8.5).

1. *E.g. Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Updesh kā ang, Sorṭhā 54, KSS p.103, KWGN p.157.*
2. *E.g. Dariyā Sāhib, Brahm bibek, Chaupāī 41, DG2 p.332, DSSK p.53.*
3. *E.g. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:6.1, SBP p.145.*
4. *E.g. Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 24–25, 943, 938; Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 165.*

sūrya (H/S), **sūraj**, **sūr** (H/Pu) *Lit.* sun; mystically and metaphorically, the effulgence and luminescence of the inner light; the light of the divine Source, the light of the soul; also, one of the several Vedic sun gods, in whose praise many hymns were composed.

It is understandable that the sun and moon would have played a significant part in the mythology of a pre-scientific age. In Vedic and later Upanishadic and yogic literature, *sūrya* is not only the physical sun. Relating to the sacredness of nature, it also represents the material heavens perceived in a somewhat more mystical manner than they are understood by modern astronomy. The sun, like many other aspects of creation, is perceived as a sacred power, worthy of veneration.

In esoteric and mythological descriptions of the cosmos and the human body, *sūrya* appears both as a deity and as the name of lesser powers and entities in creation. It is a name given to *pingalā*, one of the three primary *nāḍīs* (channels of *prāṇa* or life energy) that run along the spine. These *nāḍīs* are themselves reflections of the same three currents of creative energy emanating from *Brahman* as a part of the creative process in all lower creation. *Sūrya-bheda* (cleaving the sun) is one of the breathing exercises of *haṭha yoga*, associated with the *pingalā nāḍī*.¹ *Sūryaloka* (realm of the sun), also known as *satyaloka*, is the name of the spiritual realm where the deity *Brahmā* dwells (*brahmaloka*).² In other contexts, *sūryaloka* is the heaven (*svarga*) of the deity *Vishṇu*, the deified form of *sūrya*. *Svarga* is also the dwelling place of *Sūrya*, as the thousand-rayed (*sahasra-rashmi*) deity. *Sūryas* are a class of heavenly beings, also known as *jyotishkas* (illuminated ones). And just as the physical sun sheds light on all the earth, so was the divine Source of all known as *Sūrya*, sometimes depicted as the macrocosmic Man (*Purusha*).

In the *Ṛig Veda*, *Sūrya*, as the sun traversing the heavens, is envisioned as travelling in a golden chariot.³ *Sūrya*, in the form of the deity *Mitra*, is imagined as the eye of the world who illumines and watches everything as he crosses the sky.⁴ Among the many Vedic hymns glorifying *Sūrya* as a sacred power and deity, there are clear indications of a mystical understanding. With imaginative lyricism, the Vedic poets tirelessly hymn his radiance, and the part he plays in earthly existence. Unfailingly each morning, he arises, in a sacred event that enthralls human beings, animals, plants, and all living creatures alike:⁵

All radiant from the bosom of the morning,
Sūrya, delight of singers, now ascends.
 Brilliant, farsighted, he rises in the heavens.
 His end is far, he hastens on, light-giving.
 Inspired by him, men go about their business,
 accomplishing their tasks whatever they may be.

Ṛig Veda 7:63.3–4, in *VE* pp.320–21

More than that, *Sūrya* is the omnipresent divine power:

Sūrya has pervaded air and earth and heaven.
 He is the soul of all that moves and moves not.

Ṛig Veda 1:115.1, in *VE* p.320

One Fire (*eka Agni*) burns in many a place;
 One Sun (*eka Sūrya*) shines upon all;
 One Dawn (*eka Ushā*) illumines all;
 That which is One has become all this.

Rig Veda 8:58.2

Looking at the transcendent light beyond the darkness,
 we have come to *Sūrya*, God among gods:
 Light that is most excellent.

Rig Veda 1:50.10; cf. in CVAB p.167

He (*Sūrya*) is the swan in the midst of light,
 the lord of wealth in the mid-region,
 the priest beside the altar, the guest in the house;
 Dweller among men, dweller in the noblest place,
 in Truth, in the infinite sky;
 Born of water, born of light,
 born of Truth, born of the mountain:
 He is the eternal Law.

Rig Veda 4:40.5

The same mood and mindset still prevails in the later, more specifically mystical literature of the *Upanishads*. But here *Sūrya* as “the source of life” and energy has become “the divine inner Principle of light and life”.⁶

Having all forms, the golden one, omniscient, the final goal, the One Light (*Jyotis Ekam*), the heat-giver – this is the Sun (*Sūrya*) of a thousand rays (*sahasra-rashmi*) that rises in manifold forms as the life and existence of all creation.

Prashna Upanishad 1:8

As *Āditya*, an epithet of *Sūrya*, He is the architect of all creation. His “rays” are responsible for both its positive and negative aspects, by means of which the soul ascends or descends:

Endless are the rays of Him, who, as a lamp,
 dwells in the heart:
 White and black, brown and blue, tawny, and pale red.
 One of these, leading upwards,
 pierces the orb of the sun (*sūrya maṇḍala*),
 and reaches the world of *Brahman*.
 Through it one can ascend to the highest home.

Another hundred rays lead upwards also,
 and through them can be reached the dwellings of the gods.
 But the rays of dim colour, leading downwards,
 following them, one wanders here helplessly,
 experiencing (the fruits of one's) *karma* (actions).
 Thus, yonder blessed Sun (*Āditya*) is the cause of creation,
 of heaven, and of emancipation.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:30

Lest anyone should think that the physical sun itself is being heralded as the divine Source, the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* makes the matter clear:

No sun (*sūrya*) shines There,
 nor moon, nor stars;
 Neither does lightning flash forth,
 nor yet this earthly fire.
 Only by the shining of His light (*aṇubhā*) does all else shine:
 His shining illumines the whole universe.⁷

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 6:14

The brightness of the supreme Lord or of a personal deity as a focus of worship is often portrayed in devotional and mystical texts in terms of myriad suns (*sūrya*). Thus the *Bhagavad Gītā* likens the splendour of the supreme Lord to that of a thousand suns:

If the brilliant faces of a thousand suns (*sūrya sahasrasya*) were to blaze forth suddenly in the sky – that would compare to the splendour of that great Being.

Bhagavad Gītā 11:12; cf. BGT

More extravagantly, the elephant god, *Gaṇeśha*, “with a curving trunk and huge body”, is said to possess a “splendour ... equal to that of a million suns”.⁸ Likewise, in a song now commonly used at the start of a journey to invoke divine blessings, the medieval *Advaita* Vedantist Appayya Dīkshita (1520–1593) sang, “I worship that Friend of the road, ... whose radiance is that of ten million suns (*sūrya*).”⁹ And the Vaishnavite mystic Shankaradeva (C15–16th) sings of *Vishṇu*, with a “moonlike smile” and a “body ... as bright as a million suns (*sūrya*)”.¹⁰

Other mystics have similarly spoken of the soul itself, of the inner master, of the lords or deities of the various inner regions, and of the divine Source, as radiant with the light of millions of suns. None of this is meant as any kind of mathematical equivalence. It is only intended to convey something of

the spiritual glory of the soul in the higher spiritual realms. Thus, speaking of the spiritual realm on the threshold of the soul's true home, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes:

Wonderful and marvellous is the play of that realm –
 every ray glows with the light of a sun (*sūraj*);
 Suns upon suns (*sūraj-sūraj*) glow with a novel light,
 and myriads of moons spread their splendour.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:9.16–17, SBP p.94

There are numerous other instances of similar comparable descriptions. In this context, “chanting (*japat*)” implies ‘meditating on’:

Chanting (*japat*) the *Nām*, the light of millions of suns (*sūr*) shines forth,
 and the darkness of doubt (*bharam*) is dispelled.
Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 700, AGK

In my mind are peace (*sānt*) and poise (*sahj*, tranquillity)
 and joy (*sūkh*), as if a myriad suns (*sūr*) with all their splendour
 have burst into me.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 717, AGG

Now I will describe the form of *sat Purush* (the true Lord). Every hair of His is so luminously radiant that millions of suns (*sūraj*) and moons are shamed by it. When the glory of one small hair on his body is so wondrous, how can the beauty of all his hair and body be described in words? He is utter refulgence. If I say, “ocean of brilliance”, this does not adequately describe Him.

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry, Hidāyatnāmā 21,
 SBP p.176; cf. in JJPS p.449*

See also: **jyotis, prakāsha.**

1. *E.g. Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 2:50, *HYPM* p.237.
2. *E.g. Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 2:1.6.
3. *E.g. Ṛig Veda* 1:35.2–6, 10:85.20.
4. *Ṛig Veda* 4:13.2–4, 7:63.1.
5. See Raimundo Panikkar, *Vedic Experience*, *VE* p.320.
6. See A.C. Bose, *Call of the Vedas*, *CVAB* p.166.
7. *Cf. Kaṭha Upanishad* 2:2.15; *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 2:2.11; *Bhagavad Gītā* 15:6.
8. *Songs to Gaṇeśha*, in *SSI7* pp.22–23.
9. Appayya Dīkshita, *Bhaje mārga-bandhum*, in *SSI8* pp.238–39.
10. Shankaradeva, *Madhur mūruti*, in *SSI9* pp.118–19.

sūrya-dvāra (S) *Lit.* door (*dvāra*) of the sun (*sūrya*); an enigmatic expression appearing in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, commonly interpreted as a reference to *devayāna* (path of the gods). *Devayāna* is the path of *kramamukti* (gradual liberation), in which the soul after death is said to dwell in *brahmaloka* (also known as *satyaloka*), and from there makes progress towards final liberation. Understood in this sense, the “immortal, imperishable being (*purusha*)” of the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* would refer to the deity *Brahmā*. However, *sūrya-dvāra* could also refer to the inner door that leads from the body into the inner realms, and thence to the supreme Being:

But those who live in the forest,
 leading lives of austerity (*tapas*) and faith –
 peaceful, wise, and keeping the mendicant’s vow –
 Freed from all impurity, pass through the door of the sun (*sūrya-dvāra*),
 to where the immortal, imperishable being (*purusha*) dwells.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1:2.11

See also: **sūrya**.

taste The faculty of spiritual taste, usually implied metaphorically, meaning inner contact with the Divine, as in a well-known verse from the *Psalms*:

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Psalms 34:8, *KJV*

See also: **fragrance, spiritual senses, sweetness** (8.1).

ṭawālī' (A/P) (sg. *ṭālī'*) *Lit.* rising of stars; illumination, splendour, rays; the manifestation of spiritual light within; one of the initial experiences on the inward journey, though generally described as a more advanced stage than other early experiences on the inward journey such as *lawā'ih* (flashes, glimmerings), *lawāmi'* (effulgence) and *lum'ah* (shimmer, gleam); usually regarded in Sufism as a state (*ḥāl*) rather than a station (*maqām*), since such experiences come involuntarily and are not permanent.

Hujwīrī defines *ṭawālī'* as the “dawning of the splendour of knowledge within the heart”.¹ Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj writes:

Illumination (*ṭawālī'*) is the brilliant light of divine unity that outshines all other lights already present in the heart of the mystic. It is like the light of the radiant sun that, when risen, conceals the lights of the stars in its own light, regardless of the fact that they still shine in the sky. Hallāj describes this illumination (*ṭawālī'*) thus:

When the manifestation of illumination (*ṭawālī'*) appeared
and flashed like lightning,
my unique God made pure unity exclusively mine.

Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA pp.345–46; cf. in SSE8 pp.15–16

Anṣārī also describes the experience as a significant breakthrough in the journey from inner darkness to spiritual illumination:

Illumination (*ṭawālī'*) signifies the early stages of the sun of divine unity. It rises in the East of the Unseen to shine upon the blissful. It ends the domination of darkness and removes the edifice of supposition, establishing the governance of the stars and light. Through it, God shows the way to those who enjoy the bliss and renewed aspiration resulting from His favour, elevating them to the plane of munificence. He carries those who observe spiritual practice ever higher, making them aware of their stations (*maqām*) through the radiance of this light.

There are two suns, one that shines upon the world removing all darkness, and one that shines upon the soul removing all fear of creation. When the sun of the world appears, stars disappear; when the sun of the soul shines forth, the gloom of the world (*waḥshat-i khalq*) vanishes.

In reality, there is only one sun, illuminated by its own light. Created beings do not have the capacity to perceive its full radiance. Only those who are worthy may view it to the measure of their aspiration. One who is content to view the sun with his own eyes has a limited benefit, while the one who allows the sun itself to contemplate him, will benefit forever. It is an error for one to attempt to see this sun with one's own eyes; one should contemplate the sun only with the eyes of the sun.

Anṣārī, Rasā'il, RJA pp.122–23; cf. in SSE8 p.16

See also: **barq**, **lawā'ih**, **lawāmi'**, **lum'ah**.

1. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XXIV, KMM p.500; cf. KM p.385.

tenth door See **daswān dwār**, **tenth gate**.

tenth gate The tenth door, the eye centre; the centre, focus or headquarters of the mind and soul in the physical body, situated in the forehead, behind and slightly above the two eyes, having no real physical location, but lying in a more subtle mental plane; the point at which the attention is to be concentrated

in order to contact the divine Word and ascend to higher realms; the thinking centre; the centre from which the attention spreads out into the body and the world during the waking state.

Many Indian mystics have described the body as a house or a city of nine (or ten) gates or doors (H. *nau dwār*). There are nine sensory portals through which the attention spreads out into the world: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and the two lower apertures. The one door that leads within has hence been called the tenth door or tenth gate (H. *daswān dwār*).

Intriguingly, the term also appears in an allegory found in one of the Nag Hammadi gnostic texts. The story concerns a certain Lithargoel, symbolizing the saviour, who invites Peter, the apostles and all the poor people of a certain place to his own city. His purpose is to give them the “pearl of great price”, the treasure of spirituality. Everything in the story is symbolic, and when Peter asks Lithargoel, “What is the name of the place to which you go, your city?”, the reply is allegorical:

This is the name of my city, Nine Gates. And let us praise God that we are mindful that the tenth is (in) the head.

Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles 6, NHS11 pp.216–17

Though surprising to find the metaphor so far from its native India, where the term would have been known from the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*,¹ it is difficult to conceive of any other likely meaning for the expression in this context.

See also: **city of nine gates** (5.1), **daswān dwār**, **gates**, **nau dwār** (5.1).

1. *Bhagavad Gītā* 5:13; *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 3:18.

third eye See **tīsar nayan**.

til (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* spot, small particle, mole, something very small; eye; also, a sesame seed or the sesamum plant (*sesamum indicum*) of Southeast Asia, cultivated for its small oval seeds, rich in oil, also used for seasoning and garnishing; esoterically, the small ‘spot’ or ‘eye’ through which the soul passes from the physical body into the subastral regions; the eye centre, the third eye.

The term has been used by a number of Indian *sants* (saints), including Kabīr, Dariyā Sāhib, and Tukārām:

When the pupils of the two eyes (*til*) become one,
then what a great spectacle becomes visible!

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 22:10, KSS1 p.66

Your Lord dwells within, why do you look without?
Says Kabīr, listen,

I have met the Lord in the *til*.

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Virah aur prem, Shabd 2:5.6, KSS1 p.7

At the citadel of the eight-petalled lotus (*ashṭ-dal kamal*),
one is steeped in pure *Nām*.

The checkpoint at which the inner door opens
is as subtle as the sesame seed (*til*).

Let the devotee first find this *til*.

Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī 1, Shabd 23:1, DG1 p.157, DSSK p.343

The Lord has come to my *til*,
and my heart is very happy.

Tukārām, Abhang 174, SPTT p.174

More recent *gurus* have also used the term. Tulsī Sāhib (c.1763–1843) of Hathras in Uttar Pradesh writes:

Seek not your Beloved in the world outside:
behold the splendour of your Beloved within your own self.
In the pupil of your eye (*putlī*) is a *til*,
wherein is hidden the entire mystery;
Look within and see what lies beyond the dark veil.

Tulsī Sāhib, in Sant Bānī, SBHB p.45; cf. TSSH p.77

By concentration at the *til*, the soul comes into contact with the divine Word (*Shabd*). Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Tulsī Sāhib's successor, writes that it is by this means that the *Shabd* is experienced. In all instances, *til* refers to the eye centre, the focus of attention behind the eyes:

O ignorant one, learn the secret of the *Shabd*.
Why permit the mind to lure you into delusion?
Raise your soul to the door of the *til* (*til kā duār*).
On the right is the current of *Shabd*,
to the left is the net of *Kāl* ('Time', 'Death').
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.16–18, SBP p.90

Understand the mystery of *Shabd*, O ignorant one –
why wander around, beguiled by the mind?

Raise your consciousness
and find the opening at the *til*,
and the current of *Shabd* flowing on the right side. . .
Then listen to the sound of bell and conch,
beyond which the music of *Onkār* is heard.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.16–17, 19, SBP p.90

Once the mind and soul focus at this point, the spiritual form of the master is contacted:

Behold the form of your *guru*,
by establishing your seat in the eye (*til*).
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 4:8.1, SBP p.41

And the soul ascends to higher realms:

Fix your attention in the *til*,
and sit in meditation on the *kanwal* (lotus)
(i.e. *sahans dal kanwal*, thousand-petalled lotus).
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:18.1, SBP p.64

Become focused within the *til*,
fix your attention in it,
and let your spirit take its seat in the inner lotus.
Invert your gaze and, in the sky,
a blossoming garden and a flame espy.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:18.1–2, SBP p.64; cf. in DSM p.191

The technique of focusing at the *til* can only be learnt from a spiritual master, and it is only by his blessings that the soul can go within:

Why flounder on this side of the eye focus (*nainan*)?
Peep into the opening of the *til* and cross over.
Learn the technique from the master, dear friend –
without his help this door will not open.
Practise that technique with love and devotion –
conquer your mind,
and take your soul across into *sahaj* (beyond the mind).
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:20.6–8, SBP p.154

And Swami Shiv Dayal Singh's disciple Baba Jaimal Singh encourages his disciple and successor-to-be Maharaj Sawan Singh to focus at the *til* every day:

Do your *bhajan* and *simran* (meditation) every day. It would be extremely beneficial to first listen to the very subtle, barely audible sound of the bell, and partly also of the conch, at the point (*til*) behind the eyes. Directing both the inner hearing (*surat*) and seeing (*nirat*) faculties, listen gently and infix this sound of the *Shabd Dhun* (melody of the Word) – just as we listen to a distant sound by concentrating on it. Listen, but do not be in a hurry. Listen every day.

Baba Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters 55, SL p.92

See also: **tīsar nayan**.

til ghar (H/Pu) *Lit.* eye (*til*) + home (*ghar*); the home behind the eyes; used in the *Ādi Granth* for the eye centre, the seat of the soul and mind in the physical body during the waking state. Guru Rāmdās refers to this centre as the *til ghar* and *ghar mandar*:

Each and every moment, my mind roams and rambles,
and runs all over the place.

It does not stay in its own home (*til ghar*), even for an instant.

But when the bridle of the *Shabd* (divine Word) is placed over its head,
it returns to dwell in its own home (*ghar mandar*).

Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1179, AGK

See also: **ghar, til, tīsar nayan**.

tīsar nayan, tīsrā til (H) *Lit.* third (*tīsar*) eye (*nayan*); third (*tīsrā*) spot (*til*); the eye centre, the single eye; the seat or headquarters of the mind and the soul in the human body, situated between the two eyebrows, just behind and above the eyes; also called the *til*, *daswān duār* (H/Pu. tenth door), and by a variety of other names.

This inner ‘door’ is the only ‘opening’ that leads the attention within. The other nine doors (the two eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, and the two lower outlets) all lead the attention outwards. It is at the eye centre that the currents of the mind and soul can be concentrated in meditation so that the soul can leave the body, passing through the experience of dying and entering the heavenly realms while still living in the physical body.

The notion of a third eye is found in Indian mythology and iconography, in which the deity *Shiva* is portrayed with a third eye upon his forehead. Consequently, he is described as *trinayana*, *trilochana*, *trinetra* or *tryambaka*, all meaning ‘three-eyed’.¹ This eye is also called *shivanetra* or *rudrāksha*, both meaning ‘eye of *Shiva*’, *Rudra* being another name for *Shiva*.

In his *Rām Charit Mānas*, Tulsīdās retells the story of how *Shiva* reduces *Kāma*, the god of worldly love, to ashes for trying to shoot him with his arrows of temptation while he was engrossed in meditation. Tulsīdās refers to it as the *tīsar nayan* (third eye):

Seeing a beautiful bough of a mango tree, the god of love (*Kāma*) climbed up to it in a mood of frustration. He joined his five arrows to his bow of flowers, and casting an angry look drew the string back to his very ears. He discharged the five sharp arrows, which smote the breast of *Shiva*. The trance was now broken and *Shambhu* (*Shiva*) awoke. The Lord's mind was much agitated. Opening his eyes he looked all round. When he saw *Kāma* hiding behind mango leaves, he flew into a rage, which made all the three realms tremble. *Shiva* then uncovered his third eye (*tīsar nayan*); the moment he looked at the god of love, the latter was reduced to ashes. A loud wail went up through the universe. The gods were alarmed, while the demons were gratified.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:86.1–4; cf. RCML pp.93–94

Tīsrā til is a translation into Hindi of the English term, the 'third eye'. In modern times, it is used almost exclusively by groups that teach or are associated with *sant mat* ('teachings of the saints'), especially those connected with the masters of Beas in the Punjab. The English term 'third eye' seems to have been adopted by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century theosophists, who used the English expression to translate Indian terms such as *shivanetra*, *rudrāksha*, *divya-chakshus* (S. divine eye), *tīsar nayan*, and so on.

The 'third eye' was further popularized by Cyril Hoskin (1910–1981), the son of a plumber from Devon who claimed that his body had been possessed by the spirit of a Tibetan *lama* known as Tuesday Lobsang Rampa. Hoskin legally changed his name to Tuesday Lobsang Rampa, and claimed that Lobsang Rampa was the real author of his books. The first of these (*The Third Eye*) was first published in 1956. The author says that he was called 'Tuesday' because (so he claimed), Tibetans are named according to the day on which they are born.

The translation of 'third eye' as *tīsrā til* first appears in printed form in the letters of Dr Julian Johnson, written from India to his fellow disciples in America (1934), after spending some time in the company of Baba Sawan Singh, whom he called 'the Great Master'. In a translation of a poem by Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Dr Johnson renders *til* as *tīsrā til*.² In the same poem, he also translates two other Hindi words with Hindi terms that were presumably more familiar to himself and to his readers in America. The verse describes the process of concentration at the third eye (*til*), and the subsequent entry to higher realms of consciousness:

I will give you the secret of the path,
 a few hints concerning it.
 First fix your mind and soul upon *tīsrā til* (*til*).
 Gather together mind and soul, again and again,
 and bring them inside.

Then behold a window,
 and beyond that an open *maidān* (*chaūkā*) or field.
 Concentrate the attention upon that and hold it there.
 You will see a five-coloured flower garden,
 and inside of that, behold the *joti* (*dīp*, ‘lamp’).
 Enjoy this scene for some days.

Then see the blue-coloured sky appearing like a *chakra* (circular disc):
 impelled by love and longing, pierce through this.
 Then gaze at the *joti* (*jot*) with detached mind.
 Hear the unending bell sound and become absorbed in it.
 Next you will hear the conch:
 let yourself become saturated with it.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:1.13–20,

SBP p.226, in WGMJ p.351

A prolific writer, Dr Johnson coined a number of terms in his descriptions of *sant mat*, of which *tīsrā til* may have been one, after consultation with his master or other Indian disciples. The term subsequently appears in the English letters of Baba Sawan Singh to his American disciples, following which it has been widely used in *sant mat* literature. Earlier Indian *sants* have used a number of expressions for this inner centre, especially *til*, *duār* (door) or *daswān duār* (tenth door), but not *tīsrā til*.

In 1947, Baba Sawan Singh was succeeded by Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, who was succeeded in 1951 by Maharaj Charan Singh. Maharaj Charan Singh explains that the seat of the mind and soul in a human being is at the *tīsrā til* or third eye. Focusing the attention at this inner door leads the soul within, where it can contact the divine creative power – the Word or “Voice of God”:

Our spiritual journey ... has two stages – one up to the eyes and the other above the eyes. The seat of the soul and the mind in our body lies hidden behind and between our two eyes, at a point sometimes called the third eye or single eye. Muslims call this point *nuqtah-i suvaydā’* (black point; hence, heart’s core, inner heart). The sages and seers of ancient India called it *Shiv netra* (eye of *Shiva*) or *divya-chakshus* (divine eye). Guru Nānak called it *til*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Path, TPCS p.56

The third eye (*tīsrā til*) is the seat of the mind and the soul. This is the pivotal point that holds the mystery of life. It is from here that our attention continually descends and spreads into the world through the nine outlets of the body, namely, the two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, the mouth, and the two lower apertures. From here, every minute, the mind wanders out. It does not sit still at this spot even for a moment. Its activities are legion. The ageless secret, the ancient wisdom, the path of the saints lies in drawing the attention back to this point, and contacting there the Voice of God which ceaselessly calls us home.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Spiritual Discourses, SD1 pp.180–81

The *tīsrā til* is the door to the inner realms of the spirit, entrance to which is gained by repeated “knocking” – through concentrating the attention by means of repetition (*simran*):

If we wish to enter our house, we must first try to find its door. The door of our real home is behind the eyes in *tīsrā til*, the third eye or single eye. To open it, we have to knock repeatedly on that door. This knocking on the door means that we reverse the flow of our scattered attention and focus it at the eye centre. When we do this repeatedly, the attention is concentrated at the third eye, the door opens and we cross the threshold of the house.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Path, TPCS p.64

Concentrating all the attention at the third eye leads to its “opening”:

The opening of the third eye means that we start seeing the visions or we have spiritual progress within. When you see the light, the colours, the moon and all those things inside, there is something which sees all that inside, and that we call the third eye.

The third eye is known as such because we’re in the habit of seeing through the eyes, but these physical eyes are not required inside. Some other perception is required, so we call it a third eye, but there’s no eye at all which you have to find inside. Christ calls it the door of the house, but then there’s no door there either. These are just ways of explaining things. When you enter a house you need a door to go in. Without a door you cannot get in, and without the veil being removed, you cannot see anything inside. That is why it has been called the third eye or the door of the house.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 91, DTL p.112

When the soul leaves the body during meditation, it passes through the gates of death, while still living:

The essential difference between ordinary death and dying while living is that the soul's link with the body is not broken. The organs of the body continue to function, and the soul returns to the body at the end of the meditation time. An adept who has perfected the art of dying while living can leave the body and return to it at will. . . . After vacating the body and coming to the eye centre, the soul's real journey homeward begins. When the entire life consciousness leaves the lower body and we go through the third eye, we are out of the physical body and we enter the astral world. Without thus dying while living, we cannot go within, get attached to the Holy Spirit and return to the Lord.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live, Introduction, DTL pp.24–25

As the attention becomes increasingly concentrated behind the eyes, it automatically passes through several centres or *chakras*. First, there is the *do-dal kamal*, the uppermost centre of the six *chakras* of the physical realm (*piṇḍa*), which is the origin of the *prāṇa* (breath, subtle life energy) that conveys life to the body. Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh explains:

Do-dal kamal (two-petalled lotus) is the sixth centre, between the two eyes. It is called *Shiv netar* or *tīsrā til*. This is the headquarters of our soul and mind during the waking state. From this point, the currents of our soul have come down and spread throughout our whole body – in every cell and hair. This is as far as the *khaṭ chakras* can take the soul. . . .

Near the sacral plexus, and associated with the function of reproduction, is the *Nāḍī*, the 'royal vein' called *kuṇḍalinī*, which lies coiled like a serpent. This is the root of all the *nāḍīs*. From it, twenty-four smaller *nāḍīs* spring forth, which support the body. Out of these, ten carry the *prāṇas* to different parts of the body. Among these, *iḍā*, *pingalā* and *sushmanā* are the major *nāḍīs*, which control the breath. They reach only as far as the *Shiv netra*, the *tīsrā til*, near the eyes. The progress of those who follow *prāṇāyām* stops at *tīsrā til*, where these *nāḍīs* end and the *prāṇas* merge in *chidākāśh*, the place of their origin. No power can carry one further than its origin. From here, some realize their limitation and take the help of the three canals or streams of the *guṇas* and manage to reach *sahans-dal kamal*. This is the first *chakra* of *brahmāṇḍ*, whence the way of the saints begins.

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul, Discourses 3, SOSJ pp.31–32

The inner 'space' that lies behind the eyes includes the *do-dal kamal*, the *antaḥkaraṇa* (human mental faculties) and a higher centre, the *asht-dal kamal*, which lies on the threshold of the astral realm where a disciple first meets the inner form of the master. The *asht-dal kamal* is also identified as the *tīsrā til*. Julian Johnson writes:

The sixth centre is called *do-dal kamal*, the two-petalled lotus. It is situated behind the eyes on a level with the lower part of the eye-balls. . . . That is the seat of the mind and soul. That is the centre of control over the body. All centres below this one are subordinate. All ‘deities’ or forces which are said to govern the body are themselves subordinate to the mind and spirit of man, which reside at this centre.

Just above this centre is another centre, called *char-dal kamal*, whose function is to supply the fourfold *antaḥkaraṇa* (mental faculties) of the mind with faculties of action. These four faculties are *manas* (sense-related mind function), *chitta* (memory-related mind function), *buddhi* (intellect), and *ahaṁkāra* (I-ness). Each of the petals of this lotus has its own sound, and these four complete the fifty-two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. This is the lowest of the six centres in *aṇḍa* (astral and lower causal realms), and lies nearest to *piṇḍa* (physical world).

Just above the *antaḥkaraṇa* four-petalled centre comes the *tīsrā til*, the third eye, at which point the master teaches us to concentrate all attention when we meditate. Thus the soul resides permanently in *do-dal kamal*, the highest centre in *piṇḍa*, and from this centre the concentrated attention is fixed on the *tīsrā til* centre, skipping the *antaḥkaraṇa* centre. The attention in this manner crosses the line between *piṇḍa* and enters *aṇḍa*, whence it departs on its upward journey. The *tīsrā til* is also called *shivanetra*, the eye of *Shiva*, and *nuqtah-i suvaydā*, the black point.

Julian Johnson, Path of the Masters, POM p.368

Maharaj Charan Singh writes:

The headquarters of our soul and mind in our body is the *tīsrā til* or *ashṭ-dal kamal*, which is “just below *sahas-dal kamal* (thousand-petalled lotus)” It is also true that mind and senses are enlivened by the soul or, as you put it, derive their power and strength from the soul. And yet they have enslaved the soul. By *bhajan* and *simran* (meditation), we try to withdraw our spirit current from the mind and senses up to the eye centre or *tīsrā til*. At the time of initiation, the master seats himself in the *ashṭ-dal kamal*, in the centre behind the eyes, which is the headquarters of the mind and the soul in the body.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light 87, QFL pp.39–40

Maharaj Charan Singh observes that no one will try to concentrate at the third eye unless they feel a divine pull:

Without developing love for the Lord, nobody can reach the third eye. Unless we feel the pull of the Lord from within, we won’t even think

of reaching the third eye. He creates the desire. He creates the love. He is the One who is pulling us from within. He is instigating us to come to the third eye. He is giving us the facilities, the opportunities, the right atmosphere and such good environment, just for us to come to Him, and to create that desire in us to come to the third eye. He is the One who's doing all this drama from within. By our own effort, we will never even think about the Father. The mind is so fond of worldly pleasures and so attached to the senses that it will never think about the Father unless He starts pulling from within.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 360, DTL p.275

See also: **shiva-netra, til.**

1. See *Shiva Purāṇa, Vidyeshvara Saṃhitā* 4:42–43, 5.51, 14.57–59, 20.52, 24.113–14, *Rudra Saṃhitā* 1:6.25, 9.2, 13.47–53, 19.2, 2:15.50, 38.22, 34, 41.40, 3:43.59–61, *passim*, *SPS1* pp.18, 23, 101, 141, 163, 196, 209, 234, 266, 340, 447–48, 464, *SPS2* p.655.
2. See also Julian Johnson, *With a Great Master in India*, *WGMJ* pp.338, 352.

tunnel A common aspect of out-of-the-body and near-death experiences, in which the individual feels as if ‘travelling’ (in consciousness) through a tunnel, culminating in an experience of inner light.

The psychologist and physician Raymond Moody, who is believed to have coined the expression ‘near-death experience’, says that the tunnel experience may be accompanied by a loud sound:

A man is dying and, as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing and, at the same time, feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment, and he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.

Raymond Moody, Life After Life, LAL p.31

At other times, the tunnel itself seems to be of light:

I can remember so vividly being above and to the right of the bed in the delivery room at the head end in a white-like tunnel; but it was white, absolutely brilliant white.

Case Study, in What Happens When We Die, WHWD p.65

Evelyn Eaton believes that this is the kind of experience known to shamans and others, after prolonged periods of meditation. She is speaking here of an experience induced by an anaesthetic in preparation for cancer surgery, beginning with a journal entry:

A pressure on my spine and then OUT, V-vroo-mm into black nothingness, followed by strange impressions of great blocked-off areas and strips of black, and something like bookends of stone ledgers closing in behind me. Ahead the narrowing black tunnel. I was flowing through it naked with my arms outstretched, like a diver. I knew that I was going forward and through to Somewhere, though I saw no glimmer of any opening.

Propulsion into the tunnel by enforced, imposed methods, accidents, operations, shocks, sometimes drugs, rarely take us to the right places, or to the Light. Shortcuts imposed on us by ourselves or others are not a wise way to proceed. It is better to take the slow, sure way of the preamble, of meditation and work around the medicine wheel, in constant awareness of our goal 'the light at the end of the tunnel'. This is a familiar cliché, and like many clichés an instinctive, widespread recognition of a fundamental truth. There is the tunnel and there is the Light.

The tunnel is well known to shamans, who travel through it constantly in search of healing for their patients, or to obtain the help of power animals, or on other missions requiring altered states of consciousness (without the use of drugs). They have many ways of entering the tunnel and many methods of controlling their passage through it.

Evelyn Eaton, Shaman and the Medicine Wheel, SMWE p.65

See also: **door, near-death experience (8.3), passage.**

ujālā (H/Pu) *Lit.* radiance, light; mystically, the inner light:

I have drunk a cup of nectar:
radiance (*ujālā*) has appeared within my mind,
and the inertia of *māyā* (illusion) has been dispelled.
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 35:34.4, SBP p.310

The source of this radiance is God:

He is joyful, blissful and merciful.
God's light (*ujālā*) is manifest everywhere.
Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1073, AGK

See also: **jyotis, prakāsha.**

ūrdh kamal (H), **ūradh kamal** (Pu) *Lit.* inverted (*ūrdh*) lotus (*kamal*). In Indian mystical expression, the lotus is a poetic and spiritual symbol, much as the pearl and dove were used in ancient Middle Eastern literature. *Ūradh kamal* refers to a mind in which the attention has been turned within and is held cup-like in concentration to receive divine grace from above. The imagery is metaphorical, intended to describe a spiritualized state of consciousness. Guru Arjun writes:

By *guru*'s grace,
the inverted heart lotus (*ūradh kamal*) blossoms (*i.e.* opens),
and the light (*pargās*) shines forth in the darkness.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 864, AGK

See also: **ūrdhva**.

ūrdhva (S), **ūradh**, **ūrdh** (H), **uddha** (Pa) *Lit.* rising or ascending upwards; tending towards a high or higher point; raised, elevated, erected, erect, upright, high; higher, upper, raised; upwards, above; contrasted with *adho* (below); commonly used in a general mystical context in reference to the higher realms, to the higher phases of the spiritual journey, to the ascent of the soul in life or at death, and so on.

The metaphor is found in many places. Buddhism speaks of the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) that create bondage to the wheel of *saṃsāra*, and which are subdivided into the five lower fetters (*orambhāgiya-saṃyojana*) and the five higher fetters (*uddham-bhāgiya-saṃyojana*). The lower five (such as lust and a belief in religious rites) are considered to be of a more gross nature than the higher five, which include desires for the subtle world as well as pride and spiritual ignorance.

Jainism, like other mystic philosophies, describes the incarnate soul (*jīva*) as having a natural upward tendency (*ūrdhvagati*). All that holds it down is its *karma*. In the case of Jainism, this is perceived as an influx of karmic particles or matter into the soul. Jain cosmography also describes the finite 'occupied universe (*loka-ākāsha*, regions of space)' as being divided into two major divisions: that occupied by single-sensed beings, and that occupied by beings with more than one sense. The latter is further subdivided into three subworlds. These are *adholoka* (lower realm, nether region) where hellish beings (*nārakis*) and certain demigods have their dwelling; *madhyaloka* (middle realm) where human beings, animals, and other demigods live; and *ūrdhvaloka* (upper realm), also known as *brahmaloka*, *devaloka*, *svargaloka*, which is the dwelling place of *vaimānika devas* (gods carried in a heavenly chariot). These regions are themselves further subdivided. Again, pervading this description, there is the concept of above (*ūrdhva*) and below (*adho*).

These three worlds correspond in broad outline to the Vedic and Puranic concept of *triloka* or *tribhuvana* (three worlds).

Likewise, in the Vedic tradition, the inverted *Ashvattha* tree, a symbol of the creative process, is said to have its roots above (*ūrdhvamūla*) and its branches below (*adho*).¹ In yogic and allied texts, there are similarly said to be channels or *nāḍīs* that lead upwards (*ūrdhva*) from the body into the subtle realm, such as the *sushumṇā*.² Using similar imagery, the *Bhagavad Gītā* describes human beings in terms of the three *guṇas* (attributes):

Those of *sattva* (truth, positivity) go upwards (*ūrdhva*); those of *rajas* (activity) remain in the middle (*madhye*); those of *tamas* (inertia, darkness), steeped in evil tendencies, go downwards (*adho*).³

Bhagavad Gītā 14:18

Similarly, in the Buddhist *Dhammapada*:

He in whom a longing has arisen for the Ineffable, whose mind has been enthralled by it, and whose mind is not bound by material pleasures – such a person is known as one who is bound upstream (*uddham-sota*).

Dhammapada 16:10

In the *Upanishads*, the path to the Supreme is again depicted as an ascent:

I have found the narrow, long, and ancient way.
By it, the wise, the knowers of *Brahman*,
ascend (*ūrdhva*) to the heavenly world, freed from all this.

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 4:4.8

In this context, departure from the body is also regarded as an ‘ascent’. The “sky”, “sun” and “moon” are used metaphorically to describe the soul’s ascent into the space and light within:

Verily, when a person departs from this world, he comes to the air (*vāyu*, atmosphere, sky), which opens there for him like the hole of a chariot wheel, and through which he goes upwards (*ūrdhva*). Then he comes to the sun, which opens there for him like the hole of a *lambara* (a kind of drum), through which he goes upwards (*ūrdhva*). Then he reaches the moon, which opens there for him like the hole of a drum, through which he goes upwards (*ūrdhva*). Then he comes to a world free from sorrow and free from cold, and there he dwells for eternal years.

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 5:10.1

On the other hand, indicating that all notions of above, below or in the middle are only intellectual concepts, attempting to grasp the ineffable:

Neither above (*ūrdhva*), nor across,
nor in the middle has anyone grasped Him.
Nothing can be compared with Him
whose name is great glory.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 4:19

Later Indian mystics have also made use of the metaphor. Kabīr uses it in a somewhat specific fashion:

The game (*chaupari*) is laid at the crossroads,
in the market between the high (*ūrdh*) and the halfway (*ardh*);
Says Kabīr, slave of the Lord:
with the master's guidance play the game well.

Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Gurudev kā ang, Sākhī 31, KG p.3; cf. KWGN p.646

Chaupari is a board game, played with dice and pawns. Kabīr is saying that, spiritually, the game of life is a struggle between higher and lower tendencies. The board on which this game is played is that of this world, of *māyā* (illusion). The mind has the choice to go either up or down. *Ardh* (halfway) probably refers to the eye centre, the natural focus of the mind and soul in a human being. This is the starting point of the real spiritual game or upward journey, which takes place between the eye centre and the Divine. It is “half-way” between being fully engrossed in the world and completely free of it.

Paltū uses the term in a similar manner. Here, perhaps, he is speaking of the spiritual stage in which the soul meets the inner master:

Between the middle (*ardh*) and the high (*ūrdh*)
lies a beautiful cradle.
Therein recline the wise saints,
imbued in the colour of the Lord.

Paltū, Bānī 2, Aril 96, PSB2 p.76

See also: **ascent of the soul** (8.1), **chausar** (6.3).

1. *E.g. Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3; Bhagavad Gītā 15:1–2.*
2. *E.g. Maitrī Upanishad 6:21.*
3. *Cf. Sāṃkya Kārikā 54.*

ūrṇā (S), **uṇṇa** (Pa), **mdzod spu** (T), **báihaó** (C), **byakugō** (J) *Lit.* wool, woollen thread, fibre; an abbreviation of *ūrṇākesha* (Pa. *uṇṇakesa*, curl of hair); hair

(*spu*) treasure (*mdzod*); with reference to a *buddha*, a curl, ringlet or a whorl of fine white (*bái*, *byaku*) hair (*haó*, *gō*) above and between the eyebrows; one of the thirty-two bodily marks (*dvātriṃśadvāra-lakṣhaṇa*) that a *buddha* or a great man (*mahāpuruṣa*) is said to possess; often represented in Buddhist art as a white oval or round mark on the forehead, frequently inset with a white gemstone; symbolizes the *buddha* eye, the eye of omniscience, the equivalent of which is found in many representations of Hindu deities; present in the art of most Buddhist cultures except that of Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos; also represented in images of *bodhisattvas* and other celestial beings.

Listing the thirty-two marks of a *buddha*,¹ the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* says: “The whorl (*uṇṇa*) of hair between his eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*), the white brilliance of which surpasses that of crystal (*sphaṭika*).

A tuft (*ūrṇā*) of white hair (*jaṭa*) grows between his eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*), the white brilliance of which surpasses that of crystal (*sphaṭika*).

Nāgārjuna, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra 36:2.1.3, T25 1509:219c, TVW3 p.1102

Speaking of a Pure Land meditation technique that requires repetition of the name of the celestial *buddha* Amitābha, followed by visualization of the *buddha*’s form, the Vietnamese Buddhist master Thich Thien Tam (1925–1992) recommends focusing upon the *buddha*’s *ūrṇā*:

To be successful in this meditation, it is necessary, at the outset, to visualize the body of Amitābha Buddha in general, then concentrate on the *ūrṇā*. This mark is empty and transparent, like a white gem with eight facets. . . . The *ūrṇā* is the basic mark among the thirty-two auspicious marks of the *buddhas*. When this visualization is successful, thanks to the affinity thus created between Amitābha Buddha and the practitioner, other marks will appear clearly, one after another.

Thich Thien Tam, Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith, BWFP p.127

The *ūrṇā* figures in a number of the colourful and picturesque descriptions found in the *Mahāyāna sūtras*. The *Lotus Sūtra*, for instance, describes how the light emanating from the Buddha’s *ūrṇā* illuminates countless worlds:

At that time, the *Tathāgata* emitted a glow from the tuft of white hair (*ūrṇā*) between his brows that illuminated eighteen thousand *buddha*-lands to the east, omitting none of them. . . .

At that time in the assembly, there were two thousand million *bodhisattvas* who wished to listen to the *Dharma*. These *bodhisattvas*, seeing this glow illuminate the whole *buddha*-land and gaining

something they had never had before, wished to know the reason for this glow.

Lotus Sūtra 1, T9 262:4a18–22; cf. LBFD p.14

And again:

At that time, the Buddha emitted a single glow from his white hair-tuft (*ūrṇā*), by which straightway were seen the *buddhas* of lands in the eastern quarter equal in number to the sands of five hundred myriads of millions of *ṇayutas* (myriads) of Ganges rivers. All those lands had *sphaṭika* (crystal) for soil, and were adorned with jewelled trees and jewelled garments. Within, they were full of numberless thousands of myriads of millions of *bodhisattvas*. Jewelled flags hoisted within them, and a jewelled net spread over them. The *buddhas* of those lands preached the *dharma*s with a great, subtle sound. Also seen were incalculable thousands of myriads of millions of *bodhisattvas*, who filled the lands everywhere, preaching *Dharma* to the multitudes. To the south, the west, and the north, to the four intermediate directions as well as upward and downward, wherever the glow of the white tuft (*ūrṇā*) reached, it was also thus.

Lotus Sūtra 11, T9 262:32c29–33a7, LBFD p.185

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* provides a number of similar descriptions:

At that time, the brilliant light of *bodhisattva* power emanated from the bright circle of hair (*ūrṇā*) between the eyebrows of Shākyamuni Buddha. Accompanied by innumerable rays of light, it illuminated all the *buddha*-worlds throughout the ten directions, permeating everything, everywhere, bringing to an end all evil and all suffering. In all the worlds throughout the ten directions, illuminating all those empowered to expound the *dharma* at the great assembly of *buddhas*, it revealed the inconceivable mystic power of the Buddha.

Having illumined the body of all the *bodhisattvas* at the great assembly of *buddhas* throughout the ten directions, the light formed into great towering clouds extending into the void above. Then all the *buddhas* throughout the ten directions began to do the same, emanating the brilliant light of *bodhisattva* power from the bright circle of hair (*ūrṇā*) between their eyebrows, accompanied by innumerable rays of light, universally manifesting the inconceivable power of Shākyamuni Buddha, illuminating the great assemblies of the *buddhas* in all the worlds.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 23, T9 278:544a5–14

And in another place:

At that time, the blessed Buddha, . . . from the bright circle of hair (*ūrṇā*) between his eyebrows, began to emanate a light known as ‘Illumining Past, Present and Future, Opening the Gates to the *Dharma*-Realm’, accompanied by lights as numerous as there are tiny specks of dust in countless *buddha*-worlds and by which he illumined all the worlds and oceans throughout the ten directions.

Avatamsaka Sūtra 45, T9 278:683c29–84a1–3

The same is said of other celestial *buddhas* who dwell in the countless *buddha*-lands:

At that time, from the circle of hair (*ūrṇā*) between the eyebrows, the *buddhas* emanate a light known as ‘Possessors of Omniscience’, accompanied by immeasurable and boundless rays of light.

Avatamsaka Sūtra 27, T9 278:572b2–4

See also: **dvātrimśadvara-lakṣhaṇa** (7.3), **pañcha-chakshus**.

1. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 14, *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.17–19, TBLD pp.205–6.

xuánguān (C) *Lit.* mysterious (*xuán*) doorway (*guān*); mysterious barrier, pass, or gate; in Daoism, a metaphor for the transition point or gateway between the material and the spiritual realms; one of a number of synonymous terms, including *xuánqiào* (mysterious opening) and *xuánpìnmén* (gateway of the mysterious female).

The use of *xuán* in this context can be traced to the introduction of the notion of a *xuánmén* (mysterious gateway or door) in the opening chapter of the *Dàodé jīng*, the primary Daoist source. The author speaks of both “the wondrous” (*i.e.* *Dào*), which can be contemplated by those who have no desires, and “the manifestations” (*i.e.* the created realm of “ten thousand things”), which is the field of experience to which those who entertain desires are confined. Both, however, are “mysteries”; and the “mystery of mysteries” is that there is a gateway between the two that leads to “all wonder” – to spiritual realms and to the *Dào* itself:

The *Dào* that can be described
is not the eternal (cháng) *Dào*.
The name that can be named
is not the eternal (cháng) Name.

The Nameless

is the beginning of heaven and earth.

The Named

is the Mother (mǔ) of the ten thousand things (wànwù).

Ever desireless,

one contemplates the Wondrous (miào).

Ever desiring,

one contemplates the manifestations.

The two spring from the same source,

but differ in name.

But both are mysteries (xuán).

And the mystery of mysteries (xuán zhī yòu xuán)

is the gateway (mén) to all wonder (miào).

Dàodé jīng 1

The original meaning of *xuán* is ‘black with red in it’, with the extended meanings of black, dark, deep, thick, mystic, profound, abstruse, far, quiet, and sky. The common rendering of *xuán* as ‘mystery’ or ‘mysterious’ can lead to the misconception that Daoism and its teachings are labyrinthine and beyond comprehension. The writer’s intention, however, was to draw attention to the existence of a mysterious (*xuán*) gateway (*mén*) or point of transition between the material and the spiritual realms. Darkness, depth and the colour black all signify that the gate is deeply hidden and unseen by the physical eye. In a succinct style, using few words with multiple nuances, the writer uses *xuán* to indicate that this gate leads to the light that is hidden behind the thick veil of darkness (red within black); that it is deeper than the deepest and further than the furthest, beyond imagination. Beyond the gate, the door, the wall or the veil of darkness, in the deepest depth and at the furthest distance, is the final wondrous abode, where the spirit merges with *Dào*. The very existence of such a “gateway” is what the *Dàodé jīng* calls the “mystery of mysteries”.

The *mén* (door) opens and closes. This is the means by which things come into being. When it opens, things come out – they are created, and the result is multiplicity. When it closes, things go in – they return to *Dào*, the wondrous. The Chinese character *mén* (door) later evolved into *guān* (the entryptpoint or checkpoint into a kingdom or city in olden times). While retaining the meaning of a door that opens and closes, it adds the meaning of being the only entrance – one that is heavily guarded, requiring permits or passes before entry is allowed.

It is from this first chapter of the *Dàodé jīng* that various terms for this transition between the physical and the spiritual have come into existence. Master Yú Dòngzhēn (C13th) explains that the *xuánguān* cannot be located

in any physical place. In his *Understanding the Mysteries*, he observes that in order to find the *xuánguān* within, it is necessary to eliminate the ego through spiritual practice:

The opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) lies within. It is without structure and form, and it is limitless. Try to find it, and it will seem as if it is beyond thousands of mountains. Try to locate it in the heart, liver, spleen, lungs or kidneys, and you will find nothing. Words cannot describe this opening. If you try to grasp it, it is nowhere to be found. . . .

The opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) is the most important gate (*guān*) in the body. This opening (*qiào*) is the mind within the mind. It is not made of flesh and blood, yet it is the spirit that directs everything within us. The spirit dwells inside a substantive form. It is there, and yet not there. When ego is absent, the one opening of the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) will emerge. However, even if only the tiniest trace of ego is present, the opening (*qiào*) will disappear. . . .

The one opening of the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) is the origin of the ten thousand things (*wànshì*). In movement, it interacts with everything; in stillness, it cultivates itself within. Existing and yet not existing, it is neither filled nor empty. Focus on it, and it will become still.

Yú Dòngzhēn, Wùxuán piān 6, 12, DZ1046; cf. NEL pp.58, 60–61

Explaining a verse from master Zhāng Bódūān's eleventh-century *Chapters on Awakening to Perfection*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says that the gold elixir (*jīndān*) – awareness of one's original and immortal true nature – is present within everyone. It can be found with the help of an enlightened master (*míngshī*), who reveals the difference between mystical and reflected knowledge, and shows the way to the discovery of the “one opening of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)” that leads to the spiritual heights:

The great medicine (*dà yào*) of the gold elixir (*jīndān*) is inherent in everyone; it already exists in every house (*i.e.* body). If you meticulously study the true teaching, seek an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*), know the two medicines (*yào*) of true (mystical) knowledge (*zhēnzhī*) and reflected knowledge (*língzhī*), and find the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) – then, without let or hindrance, you will go straight to the other shore. In one day's work, you will attain the illuminating elixir (*dān*) of pure *yáng*. Why wait three years or nine years?

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

“One day”, “three years” and “nine years” are stock expressions used by Daoist teachers to refer to the time it takes for spiritual practice to result in spiritual attainment – which varies between individuals.

In *Dispelling Doubts on Symbolic Language*, master Liú Yīmíng again explains the meaning of *xuánguān* and directs his readers away from the notion that there is an actual physical location for this “mysterious pass”. As the opening to realms beyond time and space, the *xuánguān* cannot be understood by discursive thinking, and it has no fixed location:

The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is a gateway (*guānkǒu*) that is utterly mysterious (*xuán*) and entirely subtle (*miào*). It is also called the ‘door between life and death’; the ‘chamber between living and dying’; the ‘border between spiritual being and human being’; the ‘gateway between compassion and punishment’; the ‘opening between nonexistence (*wú*) and existence (*yǒu*)’; the ‘cavity of spirit and energy (*shénqìxué*)’; the ‘ground of emptiness and creation’; the ‘crossroads’; and by many other names – all of which are intended to depict this one opening (*qiào*).

The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is another name for the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). Because *yīn* and *yáng* are both present within it, it is called the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn mén*). Because its abstruse subtlety is unfathomable, it is called the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). They are essentially referring to the same one opening (*qiào*).

Those who are ignorant of this take the place between just below the heart and just above the kidney, or the centre of the navel, or the end of the spine (sacrum), or the middle of the spine between the two scapulae as the location of this mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). They are all mistaken. The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) has no fixed location. If it had a fixed location, it could not be called the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). . . .

I now point it out clearly to you, that (the mysterious pass) is within the undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*) and indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*), at the border where existence (*yǒu*) and nonexistence (*wú*) enter into each other at a crossing. *Chapters on Awakening to Perfection* says, “Seek embodiment (*xiàng*) within the undifferentiated abstruseness. Seek your true essence within the indiscernible profundity. It is here that existence and nonexistence enter naturally into each other. If you have not experienced it, how can you imagine attaining it?”¹

Also, *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir* says, “This opening (*qiào*) is not a physical opening (*qiào*). It is the merging point between heaven and earth. It is called the cavity of spirit and energy

(*shénqìxué*)...² This is essentially referring to the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

To “seek embodiment” means to seek one’s reality, the truth of one’s own being. “Undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*)” and “indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*)” are terms derived from the *Dàodé jīng*;³ they are intended to convey how impossible it is to put this transcendent reality into words. In Daoist cosmogony, the “undifferentiated abstruseness” is the intermediate stage in the cosmogonic process between the undifferentiated *Dào* and the manifestation of heaven and earth.

Master Liú Yīmíng summarizes the mysterious character of the *xuánguān* in a four-line verse:

Rarely known is the one opening (*qiào*)
of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).
Within the undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*)
and indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*),
there are *yīn* and *yáng*.
Going with the current (of creation)
is the road of suffering (*fánnǎo*).
Going against the current (of creation)
is the foundation of saints and sages (*shèngxián*).

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

In *Further Discriminations in Cultivating Reality*, another of his many writings, master Liú Yīmíng again elucidates the meaning of the term:

The main point is that this opening (*qiào*) is an utterly mysterious (*xuán*) and entirely subtle (*miào*) pass (*guān*). Here, life and death part from one another; here, the saintly and the ordinary separate from one another. This is the secret transmitted from one patriarch to the next, from ancient times to the present day; it is not something that can be known by random speculation. . . .

Since the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) has no form and no appearance, how could it have a location? Since it is neither form nor emptiness, how could it have a position? If it could be observed by means of its location or position, it would be something possessing form and appearance, and we could not call it the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

This opening (*qiào*) is not a part of the illusory (physical) body; yet it is not apart from the illusory body. It is not a part of the illusory body, because it is not something material that possesses form; it is

not apart from the illusory body, because it cannot be sought outside the body. In other words, it is something neither outside the body nor inside the body. Therefore, it can only exist in what is neither inside nor outside. There is a particular celestial process in all this.

For this reason, the ancients dared not describe it in writing, but they also dared not keep it secret and be silent about it. Therefore, they spoke about it using metaphors.

Lǐ Yímíng, Xiūzhēn hòubiàn, ZW261, DS7; cf. CTP pp.101–2

Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) similarly emphasizes that this ‘opening’ cannot be found in any physical location in the body:

The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is an utterly mysterious (*xuán*) and entirely subtle (*miào*) mechanism. How can it have a fixed location? Placing it in the body (*shēn*) is incorrect. Separating it from the body and seeking it outside the body are also incorrect.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

To help his readers understand, he offers the image of a puppet. In this analogy, the “master of the self (*zhǔréngōng*)” is the purified, higher, and original mind. This mind is above the “mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)” and hence is in control of it. The mysterious pass is the point of transition from which all below it is manifested and, in turn, controlled. As Yú Dòngzhēn observes, it is the “origin of the ten thousand things (*wànshì*)”:⁴

The opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is an utterly mysterious and utterly wonderful mechanism. It is not between the eyebrows, nor in the forehead, nor at the navel, nor in the bladder, nor in the kidneys, nor between the navel and the kidneys, nor between the kidneys. It is no single point in the body, from head to heel. Nor can it be sought anywhere outside the body. Therefore, sages simply use the character ‘centre (*zhōng*)’ to ‘reveal’ it to human beings. This character ‘centre (*zhōng*)’ is it.

It is easier to understand using the analogy of a puppet. All the movements of a puppet’s hands and feet, its dancing and gesticulating – none of these are done by the puppet, but by the pulling of the strings. Although the mechanism is in the strings, it is he who has control over the puppet who is really pulling the strings!

Do you know the person who is controlling the puppet? The puppet represents this physical body. The strings represent the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). The one who controls the puppet represents the master of the self (*zhǔréngōng*). The movements of the hands and feet of the physical body are not performed by the hands and feet. They are

moved by the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). Though they are moved by the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*), the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is in turn moved by the master of the self (*zhǔréngōng*). If you understand the functioning of this process, how can you not become an immortal (*chéngxiān*)?

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

As Lǐ Dàochún observes, since this “mysterious pass” has no physical location in the body, Daoist masters often refer to it as the “centre”:

The opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is right in the centre (*dāngzhōng*).

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

But this “centre” has no physical location. It is within, “where thoughts do not arise”:

The saints (*shèngrén*) wrote only one word ‘centre (*zhōng*)’ to show people that this word ‘centre’ is the opening (*qiào*) to the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). This ‘centre’ does not mean within as opposed to without, nor the centre of the four directions, nor the centre as in the middle. Buddhists describe it as that state of being in which you do not discriminate between good and bad and you stay in the moment, thereby revealing the original state (*běnlái miànmù*) of your inner self. The Daoists call it “where thoughts do not arise”.

Lǐ Dàochún, quoted in Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Its discovery is more a matter of realization than location:

When body and mind are tranquil and calm, its true mechanism and wonderful function will be revealed automatically (*zìrán*). . . . Once the revelation of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is realized, it is realized forever. . . . If people today take any point that is physical or related to the physical as the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*), they will not become accomplished – no matter how diligently they practise or how determined they are. Even if you wanted me to point it out directly, I am afraid you would not be able to reach it, and would not be able to make use of it. Only when it is naturally revealed will you attain it.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

In his *Compass Centre Directions*, master Chén Chōngsù (*aka. Xūbái*, C14th) refers to the mysterious pass as being “at the centre of heaven and earth” – at the meeting point of heaven and earth:

What we call the ‘single opening of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān yī qiào*)’ or the ‘gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*)’ is inside the human body, at the centre (*zhōng*) of heaven and earth, innately connecting us with creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*).

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán, DZ243 10b, JY211

Master Liú Yīmíng similarly describes it as “the opening between existence (*yǒu*) and nonexistence (*wú*), the cavity of spirit and energy”.⁵

This ‘opening’ or ‘point’ of transition is known by many different names in different spiritual traditions. In Daoism alone, there are numerous synonyms. Master Chén Chōngsù mentions more than twenty terms used by the “people of old (*gǔrén*)”,⁶ explaining that these “symbols used by the sages appear in the alchemical classics.”⁷ But he, too, points out that if one were to look for it in the body it would not be in any of the places suggested by the proponents of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), such as the nose, the heart, the liver, the brain, or anywhere else. “So, where is it?” he asks:

I’ll tell you: my secret name for it is the ‘centre of the compass (*guīzhōng*)’. Having unwavering focus therein, the immortal embryo (*tāixiān*) is formed.

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán, DZ243 9a, JY211

He then quotes from the *Dàodé jīng*:

The talkative are continuously exhausted:

it would be better to focus on the centre (*zhōng*).

Dàodé jīng 5

Master Chén Chōngsù quotes several passages from previous masters, saying that they are all authentic teachings and that they all point to the same mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) or mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). But for those who seek these things and want to understand them, he cautions that the Daoist immortals (*shénxiān*) who have firsthand experience are only providing indications. The real thing is beyond words and descriptions. Although master Chén has reflected on these various explanations and found them to be generally clear, he still does not regard them as the reality itself. To encourage his students to experience the real thing, he asks, “So what to do?” In his reply, he recommends focusing and stilling the attention within until contact with the “one Breath (*yīxī*)”, “true Breath (*zhēnxī*)”, or “primordial Energy (*yuánqì*)” is established:

With undivided determination, the attention will become fixed. As long as the mind is being cleansed and thoughts are being stopped, . . .

and attention is constantly being directed towards stillness and prevented from scattering or falling into slumber, then the life energy (*qì*) will be in harmony and peace, and a true human being (*zhēnrén*) will become still.

In this state of stillness, direct your contemplation (*guān*) towards the inner brightness (*zhào nèijǐng*). When your attention is completely fixed, you will have abundant experience of this brightness and will become aware of the one Breath (*yīxī*) coming from the centre of the compass (*guīzhōng*), indistinctly (*húnhún*), constantly ascending and soaring upwards. Hold fast to it and retain it with sincerity; listen to it intently. . . .

The infusion of the dense mist (*yīnyūn*) – unfolding and concealing (the merging of *yīn* and *yáng*) – is subtle, wondrous, and without end. Shortly after this, you should ignore the life energy (*qì*) and join with the spirit (*shén*), becoming one with the undifferentiated wholeness (*hùndùn*). Reaching ultimate emptiness, remain utterly still. The mind should be unperturbed – without any thought, no coming or going, no in or out, constantly clear and still. This is called ‘real people breathing from their heels’. ‘Heel’, here, means deep breath. This is the sign of spirit (*shén*) merging with the creative Energy (*qì*).

So, I say, “This is where the primordial Energy (*yuánqì*) causes life to take birth. This is the source where the true Breath (*zhēnxī*) originates.” When the attention is there, (the mysteries of) creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*) are revealed. This Breath comes from the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). It is neither high nor low, neither left nor right, neither front nor back, neither slanting nor leaning. It is right inside the human body, at the centre (*zhōng*) between heaven and earth. This is where to gather, to preserve, to intermingle, to refine, to bathe, to cultivate, to manifest (*jié*) the (spiritual) embryo (*tāi*); to be reborn, and to become transformed into a spiritual being.

This opening is revealed by *yáng* (*i.e.* spirituality) and concealed by *yīn* (*i.e.* materiality). It is basically formless. When the attention is there, it opens.

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhīnán, DZ243 11b, JY211

To “manifest the embryo (*jiétāi*)” means to still the energy and manifest the spirit at the mysterious gateway. *Jié* means to ‘to tie’, ‘to bind’ or ‘to congeal’, which in this context means ‘to develop out of potential’, ‘to make real’, or ‘to manifest’. The “dense mist” symbolizes the intermingling of *yīn* and *yáng*.

The “undifferentiated wholeness (*hùndùn*)”, also translated as ‘primordial chaos’, ‘the inchoate’, ‘muddled confusion’ and so on, is synonymous with expressions such as ‘indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*)’ and ‘undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*)’. These terms refer to the intermediate stage in the

cosmogonic process between the undifferentiated *Dào* and the manifestation of “heaven and earth”. This stage is complete within itself, and yet contains the ‘cosmic seed’ that will be manifested as creation.

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) quotes master Chén Níwán (C13th), who also speaks of focusing the attention until the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) reveals itself, and the meditator comes into contact with the “one inherent Energy (*xiāntiān yīqì*)”:

Sit in stillness and keep your attention focused, without thought, until the exercise is perfected and becomes continuous, all day long, like a hen sitting on her eggs without moving. Then the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) will automatically reveal itself – so vast, there is no outside; so minute, there is no inside. At this point, harvest the one inherent Energy (*xiāntiān yīqì*) as your foundation, and persevere in your practice. Very soon, you will join the rank of saints such as Lǚ (Dòngbīn) and Zhōng (Zhōnglí Quán).

Chén Níwán, in Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Chén Chōngsù continues his elucidation of the mysterious “opening”:

This one opening (*qiào*) existed before birth (*xiāntiān*) and continues to exist after birth (*hòutiān*). The energies from before and after birth mingle with each other in an undifferentiated wholeness (*hùndùn*). Within this indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*), there appears the finest subtle essence (*jīng*); out of undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*), there is this something. And this something is no ordinary something; this essence is no ordinary essence. When heaven has it, heaven becomes clear. When earth has it, earth is at peace. When human beings have it, they obtain spiritual awareness.

This one opening (*qiào*) has no boundaries and depends on nothing. It has neither inside nor outside. It is a big mistake to seek it as a physical form or image.

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán, DZ243 9b, JY211

According to the *Secret of the Golden Flower*, it is only when the attention is fully withdrawn from the outer to the inner that awareness of the “mysterious pass” or “inherent opening” arises. This “opening” lies within the mind itself, and finding it is not a matter of seeking some particular bodily location but of focusing the attention. “Reversing the light (*huíguāng*)” is a Daoist idiom for reversing the flow of attention from outward to inward:

The practice of reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is entirely related to the method of reversal (*nì*) in order to focus on the inherent mind

(*tiānxīn*) that dwells within the sun and moon (between the eyes, at the transition between the physical and the spiritual, in the union of *yīn* and *yáng*). . . . Confucians call it the ‘centre of emptiness (*xūzhōng*)’; Buddhists call it the ‘plateau of consciousness (*língtái*)’; Daoists call it the ‘homeland (*zǔtǔ*)’, ‘yellow court (*huángtíng*)’, ‘mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)’, and ‘inherent opening (*xiāntiān qiào*)’.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 1, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Master Mǎ Héyáng (C20th) also observes that the “mysterious pass” is found within a still mind. When the all-pervading *Dào* is realized, everything is seen to be a part of it. Then it becomes clear that the “mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)”, the transition between the material and the physical, is everywhere, for everything is being continuously manifested out of the *Dào*. Then everything in nature becomes an avenue to spiritual experience:

The point where thoughts are eliminated is where the one opening of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān yī qiào*) is. It is where spirit (*shén*) and life energy (*qì*) join as one. It is from here that creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*) are created and originate. It is also called the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). To ‘obtain the medicine (*yào*)’, ‘manifest the elixir (*dān*)’, ‘restore the elixir (*dān*)’, and to ‘be born bodiless (*tuōtāi*, to shed the body) and transform spiritually (*shénhuà*)’⁸ – all of these are closely associated with the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). When *Dào* is realized, the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is seen to be everywhere – in the flowing of streams, in the blossoming of flowers, in the chirping of birds, and in the buzzing of insects. These are simply the natural manifestation of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Mǎ Héyáng, in Fǎngdào yǔlù, FYL

The twentieth-century master Gǔyángzǐ teaches that a “superior form of meditation” is “not to focus on an opening, not to tune the breath, but to be perfectly empty and silent, not giving rise to a single thought”⁹ – in other words, stilling and emptying the mind, letting go, and allowing the *Dào* to enter. Nevertheless, he says, for many people it is helpful to focus on an “opening”. Since an opening has by definition nothing in it (otherwise it would be obstructed and not an opening), the implication is that this “opening” is the darkness that is ‘seen’ when the eyes are closed and the attempt is made to keep the mind free of thoughts. Focusing on a notional point in the darkness develops concentration, and as concentration is enhanced, the need to focus on any particular point is diminished:

In the beginning, when extraneous thoughts crowd in like a multitude of weeds, it is necessary to focus intensely on the opening (*qiào*).

When the mind becomes clear and thoughts are diminished, then it is appropriate to gradually lessen the intensity and relax.

Gǔyángzǐ, in Fǎngdào yǔlù, FYL

Some Daoist texts, however, do speak of various locations within the body that are used as a focus for concentration – the head, the heart, the navel, and so on. But whichever point is chosen, master Wàn Zhōnghé (C20th) stresses the importance of comfort and naturalness:

When sitting in meditation, regardless of which opening (*qiào*) you focus on, it is necessary to meditate in a comfortable, relaxed, and natural way.

Wàn Zhōnghé, in Fǎngdào yǔlù, FYL

With a relaxed approach, the adept eliminates all thoughts of body, mind and self, and draws closer to the “mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)”:

Sit in meditation (*jìngzuò*) until there is neither other nor self – until the body is forgotten (*wàng*) as if it had perished. Then, one is not far from the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Gǔyángzǐ, in Fǎngdào yǔlù, FYL

When through meditation the mind has been made silent and still, and has thus passed beyond thought, then consciousness becomes pure and unadulterated, enabling it to expand and become aware of what lies within. Master Yuánhuàzǐ (C20th) explains that talking about this spiritual experience does not help and can even hinder true understanding. If the instructions given by an enlightened master are followed properly, then at the right time, realization will be spontaneous:

The crucial first step of the practice lies in discovering the one opening of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān yī qiào*).

When the first step of the practice has been correctly performed, the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) will open by itself. The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is a higher experience that takes place when spirit (*shén*) and life energy (*qì*) have joined as one. When the time comes, the experience happens naturally. When trying to describe the experience, it is easy to become attached to concepts. When attached to concepts, the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) will never open.

In his *Treatise on Clarifying Confusion*,¹⁰ Bái Yùchán says, “Sit in stillness and keep your attention focused without thought, until the exercise is perfected and becomes continuous, all day long like a hen sitting on her eggs without moving. Then spirit (*shén*) returns (to its original nature), life energy (*qì*) reverses (its direction of flow from

downwards to upwards), and the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) automatically reveals itself.”¹¹ This explains the steps of the practice of discovering the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) most succinctly and definitely. Please study it carefully.

Yuánhuàzǐ, in Fǎngdào yǔlù, FYL

Although the practice is simple to describe, success requires perseverance. Master Chén Yīngníng (C20th) explains a couplet from a poem on meditation by master Sūn Bù’èr (C12th), in which she advises practitioners to “be firmly present at the door of total control”.¹² Master Chén Yīngníng goes on to say that the “mysterious pass” is revealed when *yīn* and *yáng* merge, and the meditator transcends duality:

To eliminate thoughts is not as easy as it sounds. There is only one method of returning all thoughts to the One, and that is: to “be firmly present at the door of total control”.

The door of total control is what Lǎozǐ called the door or gateway (*mén*) of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*), and what later Daoists called the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). Zhāng Bódūān said, “This opening is not a worldly one. It is produced from the union of heaven and earth. It is called the opening of energy and spirit (*shénqìxué*), where pure water and fire (*i.e.* *yīn* and *yáng*, energy and spirit) exist.” In other words, it is nothing but one *yīn* and one *yáng*, one spirit (*yīshén*) and one energy (*yīqì*). When *yīn* and *yáng* merge, spirit and energy capture each other. It is this that establishes the formation of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù’èr nǚgōng nàidān cìdìshī zhù, SBNN

See also: **gǔshén** (8.1), **xuánpìn**, **xuánqiào**.

1. Zhāng Bódūān, *Wùzhēn piān*, DZ141.
2. Zhāng Bódūān, *Jīndān sìbǎi zì*, DZ1081.
3. *Dàodé jīng* 14, 21.
4. Yú Dòngzhēn, *Wùxuán piān*, DZ1046, NEL p.61.
5. Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14.
6. Chén Chōngsù, *Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán*, DZ243.
7. Chén Chōngsù, *Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhǐnán*, DZ243.
8. See **jīng-qì-shén** (►1).
9. Gǔyángzǐ, in *Fǎngdào yǔlù*, FYL.
10. *Xiūxiān biànhuò lùn*, attributed to Bái Yùchán (C13th), in *Qióngguān Bái zhēnrén jí*, JY85 5:14a–17a, and in *Xiūzhēn shíshū*, DZ263 4:1a–5a.
11. Cf. Chén Níwán, in *Zhēnquán*, JY244, ZW373.
12. “Shōuxīn,” *Sūn Bù’èr yuánjūn fǎyǔ*, ZW370, JY203.

xuánpìn, xuánpìn mén (C) *Lit.* door, gateway or opening (*mén*) of the mysterious (*xuán*) female (*pìn*); sometimes as *xuánpìn zhī mén*, where *zhī* means ‘of’; in Daoism, a well-known though enigmatic image used to describe the transition or gateway between the material (‘earth’) and the spiritual (‘heaven’); one of a number of synonymous terms, including *xuánguān* (mysterious pass) and *xuánqiào* (mysterious opening). *Pìn* also means ‘keyhole’ and ‘valley’, although ‘female’ is the more commonly used translation in this context.

Xuánpìn is associated with the female because it gives birth to the myriad things of creation. When the spirit ascends inward through this ‘gateway’ or point of transition, it is able to attain union with the *Dào*.

According to Daoist philosophy, the material realm or dimension is created by the interplay of *yīn* and *yáng*, and the source of this interplay is the mysterious female. In the mysterious female, the negative and positive forces of *yīn* (the female) and *yáng* (the mysterious) are merged and can be transcended. However, this transition or gateway is not something substantive that has an anatomical location:

Right under heaven, above the earth, west of thunder, east of marsh, is the home where fire and water (*yáng* and *yīn*) intermingle. Right in the centre (*zhōng*), between heaven and earth, is the human body. Inside the human body – among the eight meridians (of *qì*, subtle life energy), the nine apertures (of the sense organs), and the connecting and converging channels and conduits – is this one opening (*xué*) that is empty and idle, suspended in emptiness, the size of a millet grain. Independent of any forms, it is there – dependent only upon the essential *Dào*.

It seems to be and not to be. It seems to be there and not there. It has neither inside nor outside, yet contains heaven and earth. Golden from within, it permeates all (natural) laws, sitting in the appropriate place within the body.

Chén Chōngsù, Chén Xūbái guīzhōng zhīnán, DZ243 9a–b, JY211

Master Yú Dòngzhēn (C13th) says in his *Understanding the Mysteries*:

Within every person there is an opening (*qiào*) called the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). When you are enlightened and have acquired (awareness of) this opening (*qiào*), then the internal realms and the ten thousand things of creation will be complete within you (*i.e.* you will be one with the *Dào* and all creation). This opening (*qiào*) is not a substantive thing and, to realize it, you must extinguish your thoughts, become unattached to forms, and hold on to the centre (*zhōng*).

Yú Dòngzhēn, Wùxún piān (Preface), DZ1046; cf. NEL p.51

In what is possibly its earliest written appearance, the term is found in the *Dàodé jīng* (c.C3rd BCE):

The valley spirit (*gǔshén*) is deathless,
and is called the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*).
The gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*)
is the source of all creation.
Appearing to exist uninterruptedly,
it functions inexhaustibly.

Dàodé jīng 6

“Valley spirit (*gǔshén*)” and “mysterious female (*xuánpìn*)” are common Daoist symbols. ‘Valley’ signifies emptiness (*xū*). An empty spirit is a spirit that has been liberated from scattered thoughts and emotions, such that it has become concentrated at the spiritual centre, where it is able to ‘pass through’ the gateway (*mén*) of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) and realize the *Dào* within. Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) endorses this interpretation and warns against wrong understandings that limit the meaning of *xuánpìn mén* to a physical location or aperture in the body:

The valley (*gǔ*) represents emptiness (*xū*). The valley spirit (*gǔshén*) signifies preserving the spirit in emptiness. Mysterious (*xuán*) means profound and subtle. Female (*pìn*) symbolizes the creation of things out of emptiness. The valley spirit (*gǔshén*) is the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). The unlimited and subtle functioning of the valley spirit (*gǔshén*) constitutes the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*). This is the original interpretation.

Then there is a further explanation by Lǐ Qīng’ān (Lǐ Dàochún, C13th). Over time, the later interpretations evolved into a belief that the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) has a particular location somewhere in the body, and that it is the foundation of the valley spirit (*gǔshén*). Yet, if it is the foundation of the valley spirit (*gǔshén*), then it means the valley spirit (*gǔshén*) is attached (to the body) and cannot therefore be the valley spirit (*gǔshén*).

There are dozens of later interpretations of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) that are even more confusing and erroneous.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

In his *Awakening to Reality*, master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) says that the first objective of spiritual practice is to find the transition – the mysterious female – between the material and spiritual realms. Here, the “yellow court” symbolizes the spiritual centre (*zhōng*) of a human being and is also a synonym for the “mysterious female”:

To attain the eternal valley spirit (*gǔshén*), one must base oneself on the foundation of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). When the true essence returns to the yellow court, then the glow (*kē*, ‘flow’) of spiritual light (*língguāng*) never leaves. Rarely known in the world is the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*).

Zhāng Bódūān, Wùzhēn piān, DZ141

Discussing the meaning of the verse from the *Dàodé jīng*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) also warns against identifying the *xuánpìn zhī mén* with a particular bodily opening. The *xuánpìn zhī mén* is difficult to know; it is found in the confluence and merging of *yīn* and *yáng*:

The mysterious (*xuán*) is heaven, *yáng*, whose virtue is firm strength. The female (*pìn*) is earth, *yīn*, whose virtue is yielding submission. *Yáng* governs movement; *yīn* governs stillness. The movement and stillness of the valley spirit (*gǔshén*) is the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*).¹

This opening is where heaven, earth, human beings, and things are created. It is ultimately nonexistent, yet contains ultimate existence; it is ultimately empty, yet contains ultimate fullness. In the human body, it is . . . perfectly centred between heaven and earth – one opening suspended in emptiness, revealing and concealing as appropriate, automatically moving and still.

Inherently, it has no fixed location, no form, and no appearance. It is also called the ‘opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)’. The mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) is ultimately empty and conscious: neither existence nor nonexistence have a footing there. It is also called the ‘door between multiplicity and subtlety (*zhòngmiào zhī mén*)’.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

Earlier in the same commentary, master Liú Yīmíng points out that those who wish to follow the path of merging into the *Dào* – the “path of the immortals” – have to reverse the ‘journey’. The course that most have travelled on this earthly plane – “going along with the (outward) evolution of *yīn* and *yáng*” – has caused a dissipation of energy, consciousness, and attention. The Daoist practitioner must reverse this trend and withdraw everything back to the source – the *xuánpìn zhī mén* which opens the way to sainthood or immortality:

While the path of the world is to go with the current (of creation), the path of the immortals is to go in reverse (*nì*). ‘Going with’ means going along with the (outward) evolution of *yīn* and *yáng*. ‘Going in reverse’ means going against the evolution of *yīn* and *yáng*. People of the world only know the path of going with the current (of creation), and do not

know the path of going in reverse. So they pursue things in the realm of illusion, losing (awareness of) their true source (*zhēnyuán*).

Yáng at its extreme is *yīn*; *yīn* at its extreme is death. Students must first learn to understand *yīn* and *yáng*. To understand *yīn* and *yáng* is to know the true source. The true source is the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*). This is where *yīn* is created, and is also where *yáng* is created. It is the place where one can go with the current (of creation), and it is also the place where one can go in reverse – where one can know eternity and return to the origin, (where one can) ascend to the realm of the saints.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

In his *Dispelling Doubts on Symbolic Language*, master Liú Yīmíng again points out that the mysterious female is the source of *yīn* and *yáng*. It is essentially mystical in nature and cannot be equated with bodily openings such as the “mouth and nose”. Consequently, breathing exercises can never lead to immortality and enlightenment:

Mysterious (*xuán*) is *yáng*, which is firm and active. Female (*pìn*) is *yīn*, which is yielding and still. The gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*) is the opening (*qiào*) of *yīn* and *yáng*, the doorway of firm and yielding, the pass of action and non-action. It has no direction, no location, no form, and no appearance. It is seemingly – yet indistinctly – like an opening (*qiào*) that hangs in emptiness, the realm that the five elements (*wǔxíng*) cannot reach and the four forms (*sìxiàng*, i.e. primary principles) cannot touch. It is ultimately nonexistent (*wú*), yet contains ultimate existence (*yǒu*). It is ultimately empty (*xū*), yet contains ultimate fulfilment (*shí*). It is the opening (*qiào*) or centre (*zhōng*) where *yīn* and *yáng* are merged.

Those who are ignorant of this take the mouth and nose for the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). This is incorrect. The mouth and nose are gateways for breathing in and out, not the gateways from which *yīn* and *yáng* go forth and return. The merging of *yīn* and *yáng* produces the immortals and the enlightened. How can breathing through the mouth and nose produce the immortals and the enlightened? As it is said in *Wùzhēn piān*, “Rarely known to the world is the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*). Do not take the mouth and nose for it and mistakenly practise on that.”²

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

In the symbolism of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), the harmonious union of *yīn* and *yáng* results in the ‘conception’ of a ‘spiritual embryo’. When *yīn* and *yáng* are harmoniously combined, it is possible for the spirit to ascend and

pass through the “gateway of the mysterious female”. This is the “flowing in and out” to which Daoist practitioners aspire:

That which is immeasurable by *yīn* and *yáng* and manifests the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) is called ‘the ever-living valley spirit (*gǔshén*)’. The ever-living valley spirit (*gǔshén*) is called ‘the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*)’. The gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*) is called ‘the root of heaven and earth’. When the *yīn* and *yáng* energies have been fully purified and brought within, the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) is found.

When the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) is found, the valley spirit (*gǔshén*) flows in and out of the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*), living forever, never dying. Then the path of reversal and restoration is complete. So it is said, “To attain the ever-living valley spirit (*gǔshén*), you must establish root and foundation on the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*).”

Liú Yīmíng, Wúzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

In another passage, master Liú Yīmíng says that there are few who have the desire or the conviction to practise the reverse journey. But for those who do, he says that their first goal should be to discover the mysterious transition: the “gateway of the mysterious female”. And he again observes that this is not to be found in any physical location:

Those who aspire to practise the great *Dào* and to realize their (original) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*) must first find the gateway (*mén*) of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*). The mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) is the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). . . .

However, there are few true and genuinely ardent people (*zhēnlièshì*) in this world. It is deplorable that people do not want to make an unrelenting effort, that they are unable to endure unyielding perseverance, and that they do not seek and investigate the fundamental true teachings. Yet they mistakenly hope to attain the *Dào* by referring to the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) and the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) as physical points in the body, and by practising lesser methods, attaching themselves to form (*xiàng*) or to (the concept of) emptiness.

Truly ardent people completely let go of everything, clear their myriad *karmas* (*wànyuán*, myriad causes), and keep their mind only on important affairs that concern (spiritual) life (*shēn*). They call on true masters (*zhēnshī*), they associate with like-minded companions, and they are unrelenting in their intention. Eventually, they find that

the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) or the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) reveals itself. Thus, in the course of time, they realize their (original) nature and their (true spiritual) life. Students are urged to do this.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

When the practitioner does finally manage to bring all his attention to this ‘centre’, the attention then enters the mysterious ‘gate’ and goes ‘within’ – at which time both sound and light are experienced:

When the gateway (*mén*) of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*) opens,
then the practice is complete.
The spirit (*shén*) exits and enters through here –
revealing and concealing.
It is restored and returns to emptiness (*xū*).

From the earth bursts forth a thunderbolt of spring.
At the burst of the thunderbolt,
heaven and earth open.
Out of emptiness (*xū*) bursts forth
a globe of radiance (*guāngmíng*),
Round and complete,
shining on the bamboo hut without lack, without surplus.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

The “bamboo hut” may refer to the place of meditation or it may be a metaphorical allusion to the body as the home of the spirit.

While Daoist masters affirm that it is hard to find the “mysterious female”, they nevertheless emphasize the simplicity of the process, saying that it is “not difficult to know”. Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) says that when *yīn* and *yáng* are merged, they are understood to arise from a single “one Energy (*yīqì*)”. Focusing “body and mind (*shēnxīn*)” implies the concentration of all physical and mental energies:

The gateway (*mén*) of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn*)
is not difficult to know.
Collect and pull inward both body and mind (*shēnxīn*).
Once you experience the working of the two poles (*yīn* and *yáng*)
pushing and pulling, then you will know
how the one Energy (*yīqì*) comes and goes.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

See also: *gǔshén* (8.1), *xuánguān*, *xuánqiào*.

1. Due to a *Qīng*-dynasty taboo on the written character *xuán* (mysterious), master Liú Yīmíng and other writers of his time often substituted the character *yuán* (original). To avoid confusion, the intended word *xuán* has been used in this and other entries.
2. Zhāng Bódūān, *Wùzhēn piān*, DZ141.

xuánqiào (C) *Lit.* mysterious (*xuán*) opening (*qiào*); in Daoism, the mystical gateway or point of transition between the material and the spiritual realms; one of a number of synonymous terms, including *xuánguān* (mysterious pass or gate) and *xuánpìn* (mysterious female).

In his commentary on master Zhāng Bódūān's (C11th) *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains the term, emphasizing the fact that this *xuánqiào* has no location – physical or otherwise. It is where the unified *yīn* and *yáng* “separate” into the duality and multiplicity of created phenomena, the ‘place’ from which the material realm comes into existence:

The mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) is a concealed opening of profound subtlety. It is where *yīn* and *yáng* separate, and where (original) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*) reside. It is also called the ‘opening of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān qiào*)’, and by various other names, such as the ‘gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn mén*)’; the ‘door of birth and death’; the ‘place of living and dying’; the ‘opening of emptiness and void’; and the ‘gate of myriad subtleties’. All these names refer to the same thing.¹

This opening (*qiào*) is neither existent nor nonexistent, neither physical nor non-physical. It has neither direction nor location, neither form nor appearance. It is in a state of undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghū*) and indiscernible profundity (*yǎomíng*). It is neither inside nor outside. Any conjecture as to its location or what it looks like is a huge distraction from what it actually is...

As soon as you speculate about it, you will lose it. As soon as you analyse it, you will be mistaken; for it is not any of the physical apertures in the body that has a shape or form, or that can be seen or pointed to. It is a spiritual opening (*shèngqiào*): it has no shape or form, it cannot be seen or pointed to. ... It is the result of the *yīn* and *yáng* energies of heaven and earth merging in the centre of the Void.

Liú Yīmíng, Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

Then, referring to certain hexagrams in the *Yìjīng*, he further explains:

Heaven is firm (*gāng*), its nature is *yáng*. Earth is yielding (*róu*), its nature is *yīn*. When the two energies of firmness and yielding merge,

then the opening (*qiào*) manifests. When the two energies of firmness and yielding separate, then the opening (*qiào*) disappears. The mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) is symbolized as the centre of the void between heaven above and earth below.

If human beings are firm without being yielding, or yielding without being firm, then *yīn* and *yáng* are separate from each other. Since they are then filled with impure energies, how can the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) manifest? And since the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) does not manifest, the interaction between these two energies ceases. How then can there be any medicine (*yào*, elixir of immortality)? So the text says that it (manifestation of the mysterious opening) is the result of the merging of heaven and earth.

Liú Yīmíng, Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

Referring first to master Zhāng Bódūān's (C11th) *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir*, master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) goes on to quote patriarch Qiūzǔ (probably master Qiū Chǔjī, C13th):

The Daoist scriptures say: “This opening lies in the human body, at the centre between heaven and earth.”² The patriarch Qiūzǔ said: “It is wrong to seek it (the *xuánqiào*) within the body and it is equally wrong to seek it outside. For when it manifests, it becomes an opening; and when it does not, it is undiscoverable.”

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.69

In the same work, master Zhào Bìchén says that he is quoting from *Xìngmìng guīzhǐ* (‘Genuine Guide to Cultivation of Nature and Life’), although the excerpt, even as a free translation, cannot be found in that text:

The mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) is boundless. Awareness of it – free from all clinging – is real achievement. This mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) manifests in a state of utter stillness. If a thought arises, it immediately slips into the postnatal (physical) realm and vanishes at once, leaving no trace. If it is further sought, it cannot be found – because of the clinging to form.

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.69

Commenting on this statement, Lu K’uan Yü (Charles Luk, *d.*1978), the translator of this text, notes that the “mysterious gate” and the “mysterious opening” are the same thing.³

Master Zhào Bìchén then quotes his masters Liǎo Rán and Liǎo Kōng as saying:

This mysterious gate (*xuánguān*) is achieved by the practice of the first six steps (of *nèidān*, inner alchemy, esoteric practices)... It manifests only when the vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) unite in the original opening (*zǔqiào*) of spirit, and become the inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān zhēnyī zhī qì*).

Liǎo Rán, in Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.69

Master Zhào Bìchén continues, saying that the “inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān zhēnyī zhī qì*)” is one’s true nature:

My brother Kuíyǐzǐ said: ‘When the vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) are full, they soar up to cause the light of (essential) nature (*zhēnxìng*) to manifest; this is the light of the vitality of the one Truth (*zhēnyī*, i.e. *Dào*).’

When bright stars and flashes of light are frequently seen, they herald the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*), which manifests in space in front of the original cavity (*zǔqiào*) of spirit. It is the one real energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*), which is our original face (*běnlái miànmù*), boundless like the Great Void. Hence it is said: “The inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān zhēnyī zhī qì*) arises out of the Nothingness (*xūwú*).”

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.70

Master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) is quoted in master Yáng Dàoshēng’s (C15th) *Veritable Truth* as saying:

This opening (*qiào*) has no sides or boundaries, neither inside nor outside. It is the root of the spiritual Energy (*shénqì*), the valley of Nothingness (*xūwú*).

Zhāng Bóduān, in Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

To which master Yáng Dàoshēng adds:

This means that the void and emptiness (*xūwú*) is the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*). When emptiness (*xū*) is ultimate and stillness (*jìng*) is absolute, then there is no ego; then in deep and impenetrable profundity (*yǎoyǎo míngmíng*), heaven and earth (creation) merge with the one spiritual Energy. This is the optimal point of cultivation, so it is called the one opening (*qiào*) of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Although some authorities, such as Liú Yīmíng, are adamant that the gateway between the physical and the spiritual has no particular place, others have

located it in various parts of the body. Thus, Lu K'uan Yü adds a note to his translation of master Zhào Bìchén's (1860–1942) *Xīngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ* ('Light and Instructions on the Secret Way of Original Nature and Spiritual Life') explaining that *zǔqiào* refers to the point "between and behind the eyes".⁴ Perhaps the apparent difference of opinion can be understood by considering that this subtle "opening" lies in the mind, not in the body. And since the mind cannot be located within the body, nor can the opening. On the other hand, the mind can be focused at various locations within the body, from where the subtle realms can be accessed.

See also: **běnlái miànmù** (8.1), **xuánguān**, **xuánpìn**.

1. Due to a *Qīng*-dynasty taboo on the written character *xuán* (mysterious), master Liú Yīmíng and other writers of his time often substituted the character *yuán* (original). To avoid confusion, the intended word *xuán* has been used in this and other entries.
2. Zhāng Bódūān, *Jīndān sìbǎi zì*, DZI081.
3. Lu K'uan Yü (Charles Luk), *Taoist Yoga*, TYAI p.69 (n.1).
4. Lu K'uan Yü (Charles Luk), *Taoist Yoga*, TYAI p.70.

yuánguān, yuánpìn, yuánqiào (C) *Lit.* original (*yuán*) pass (*guān*); original female (*pìn*); original opening (*qiào*); substitutes used for *xuánguān*, *xuánpìn*, *xuánqiào*. Due to a *Qīng* dynasty (1644–1912) taboo on use of the character *xuán* (mysterious) in written form, writers of the time, such as master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821), substituted *yuán* (original) for *xuán*. To avoid confusion, the intended word *xuán* has been used in the *Treasury* for such terms. See **xuánguān**, **xuánpìn**, **xuánqiào**.

zefiyah (He) *Lit.* vision; spiritual vision; from the verbal root *zofeh* (to gaze, to contemplate); also, a seer, a prophet, in which sense it is used synonymously with *hozeh*.

In the early thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-Bahir* ('Book of Illumination'), *zefiyah* is used to describe the spiritual vision of the chariot (*merkavah*) on the inner journey. The *Merkavah* mystics (C1st BCE – C10th CE) describe their spiritual experiences as an ascent in the chariot through various stages, until they reach the vision of the throne of God, which is also called the chariot. The *Sefer ha-Bahir* quotes the *Merkavah* text, the *Hekhalot Rabbati*: "One who gazes (*zofeh*) into the vision (*zefiyah*) of the chariot first descends and then ascends".¹ Aryeh Kaplan, the translator of the text, explains that one has such a vision by becoming a vehicle or chariot for the Divine.

In the pre-kabbalistic *Sefer Yeẓirah* ('Book of Formation'), written some time between the first and the sixth centuries CE, *ẓefiyah* (vision) is understood as the means by which everything ascends to its origins in the Divine.

Ten *sefirot* of nothingness –
 their vision (*ẓefiyah*) is like the 'appearance of lightning';
 Their limit has no end.

Sefer Yeẓirah 1:6, SYAK p.51

Kaplan explains that the "word for 'vision' here is *ẓefiyah*, which usually denotes a prophetic or mystical vision". He observes that this is "the vision (*ẓefiyah*) of the *merkavah*, ... the divine chariot, ... the mystical experience on its highest levels. The *Sefer Yeẓirah* is now describing how the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities that form creation) appear in a mystical vision."²

According to Isaac the Blind's thirteenth-century commentary on the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, meditation on the vision of the *sefirot* is experienced like lightning, the *sefirot* being perceived as flashes of inner light. In Isaac's understanding, these visions or flashes are a revelation of the process by which the various *sefirot* are successively projected downwards to the material creation. The vision of each *sefirah* includes that of the *sefirot* lying below that level – the divine light or energy continuously flowing between them, one to the other:

The vision (*ẓefiyah*) is the meditation of one thing out of the other. ...
 Every cause is taken up and rises, and then looks down from a cause
 that is higher than itself. ... Everything is in the other and in com-
 munication with the other.

Isaac the Blind, Commentary on the Sefer Yeẓirah 1:6, in OKGS p.290

See also: **ḥozeh**.

1. *Hekhalot Rabbati* 1:1, in SBAK p.32.
2. Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yeẓirah*, SYAK pp.51–52.

zhào (C) *Lit.* to illuminate, to shine, to reflect; spiritual light, illumination, radiance; enlightenment; a term used in a wide variety of contexts, as for instance: the shining (*zhào*) of the sun and moon, a shining or illumined mind (*zhàoxīn*), to revert the radiance (*fǎnzhào*), to look within (*nèizhào*), inner illumination (*zhào nējǐng*), silent illumination (*mòzhào*, a form of *Chán* Buddhist meditation), the radiance of gnosis or wisdom (*huìzhào*), and so on.

The *Huáinánzǐ* says that all light and everything else in creation comes from the same source – the Great One (*tàiyī*):

The Great One (*tàiyī*) holds sway over heaven and earth and keeps the mountains and rivers in subjection. It sends forth and calls back the *yīn* and *yáng* (interplay of duality). It administers the cycling of the four seasons. It stretches out the heavens and holds together the six quarters of the globe. It supports and permeates all things, sending dew, giving light (*zhào*), affording guidance. Its mercy overflows without selfish partiality.

Huàndánzǐ 4; cf. *TGLE* p.90

The third-century *Cāntóng qì* ('Triplex Unity') maintains that this inner light can be seen as a result of self-refinement (*liànjǐ*):

Refine yourself (*liànjǐ*) internally.
In peace, stillness and complete emptiness,
the original and hidden light (*míng*) will glow
and inwardly illumine (*nèizhào*) your entire body.

Wèi Bóyáng, Cāntóng qì 6, *DZ1007, JY141*; cf. *TTW* p.80

The first essential is to control and concentrate the mind. Then the radiance of wisdom, gnosis, or mystical insight will automatically arise.

According to a summary of the teachings of master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th CE) on the subject of *zuòwàng* (sitting in forgetfulness, meditation), dated to 829 CE and carved into a rock monument at Mount Wángwū in what is now the Chinese province of Hénán:

(The *Zhuāngzǐ*) says: "He whose inner being rests in intense concentration will send forth a heavenly light (*tiān guāng*)."¹ Here, 'resting' refers to the mind while 'heavenly light' means the radiance of wisdom (*huìzhào*). So, when you concentrate your mind, the radiance (*zhào*) of wisdom (*huìzhào*) will develop within. By this radiance (*zhào*), you can then see the myriad aspects of projected reality and, in emptiness and oblivion, your mind (*xīn*) will melt into boundless serenity. This is what we call 'sitting in oblivion (*zuòwàng*)'. . . . Sitting in oblivion is the gateway to long life.

Zhāng Hóngmíng, Zuòwàng piān, in *Dàoshū*, *DZ1017 2:7a, SCJS*; cf. *SSTK* p.114

A moving mind veils perception of the inner light. Therefore, Lǐ Dàochún counsels:

The ancients say, "Always extinguish a moving mind (*dòngxīn*); never extinguish an illumined mind (*zhàoxīn*)."² An unmoving mind (*bùdòngxīn*) is an illumined mind; a mind that never stops is a deluded mind (*wàngxīn*). The illumined mind (*zhàoxīn*) is the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*); the deluded mind is the human mind (*rénxīn*).

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, *DZ249, JY226*

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn says likewise:

When contemplating inwardly (*nèiguān*), the mind will move about. When a thought arises, you must immediately stop it, remaining peaceful and still. You must eliminate all greed and attachment, as well as random and wandering thoughts. Keep practising this assiduously day and night without pausing even for a moment. “Extinguish a moving mind (*dòngxīn*); never extinguish an illumined mind (*zhàoxīn*).” Still the mind to attain emptiness, but do not get attached to the mind.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Dingguān jīng, DZ400 2a–b

According to the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, spiritual realization consists of refining, transforming and filling up the three body energies of vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*). First *jīng* is refined and transformed into pure *qì*; then *qì* is refined into *shén*; then *shén* first becomes one with all created forms before merging into the ultimate Void or Emptiness (*xū*). The spiritual status of a practitioner at these successive stages is termed *zhēnrén* (realized being), *shénrén* (spiritual being), and *zhìrén* (perfect being). Regarding the first stage, Master Sūn Sīmiǎo (C7th), in his *Cúnshén liànrì míng* (‘Inscription on the Visualization of Spirit and Refinement of Life Energy’), instructs:

Refine (and transform) the body (*shēn*, i.e. the body pervaded by *jīng*, vital essence) into pure energy (*qì*, life energy), so that it may radiate throughout the body. You are now a realized being (*zhēnrén*)! You appear in and disappear from the mundane world, alternating spontaneously. Your glittering clarity (*guāngmíng*) radiates (*zhào*) of itself, night and day, in constant brightness (*míng*).

Sūn Sīmiǎo, Cúnshén liànrì míng 13b; cf. TEAK p.324

In *Yīnshìzǐ’s Experimental Meditation for the Promotion of Health*, master Jiǎng Wéiqiáo (1892–1955) describes a series of inner experiences during the practice of *nèidān* meditation. Among these, he writes:

After settling into the state of stillness (*jìng*), my entire body began to radiate light (*guāng*). I was aware that the eye of my mind (*xīnmù*) was illumined (*zhàoyào*) in a pure white radiance (*báiliàng*), up and down, left and right, all around me like a vast sphere.

Jiǎng Wéiqiáo, Yīnshìzǐ jìngzuò wèishēng shíyàn tán 8, YJWS; cf. in SCML p.201

See also: **guāng, míng, mòzhào Chán** (8.5), **nèizhào** (8.5).

1. *Zhuāngzǐ* 23, DZ670.

zohar (He) *Lit.* radiance, shining, brilliance, splendour; the spiritual light from which the creation was projected and which can be experienced within in meditation. The mystical use of the term was derived by the medieval Jewish kabbalists from a passage in the biblical book of *Daniel*:

And they who are wise (enlightened) shall shine
like the brightness (*zohar*) of the firmament:
And they who turn many to righteousness (virtue)
will be like the stars for eternity.

Daniel 12:3; cf. KB

Zohar is a term of considerable significance in Jewish mysticism. It was used as the title of the best-known and fundamental work of the Kabbalah, the *Sefer ha-Zohar* ('Book of Brilliance'), commonly known as the *Zohar*. Written as though by Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai during the talmudic period (C1st–6th CE), recent scholarship attributes most of it to the thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist and mystic Moses de León. Other studies suggest that it was the work of a mystic fellowship under the leadership of Moses de León, including two short sections that may be by one of his disciples, and were written in the early fourteenth century. However, there remain some orthodox Jews who still believe that it is an ancient work, later revealed through Rabbi Moses de León.

The *Zohar* describes (among other things) the process of creation from the primal *Zohar* light. In his *Shekel ha-Kodesh* ('The Holy Coin'), Moses de León discusses four aspects of spiritual light, which he groups under the general category of *zohar*, and which are stages of the all-inclusive *Zohar*. The four aspects are: *bahir* (brilliant), *zohar* (radiant), *muḥak* (scintillating), and *nogah* (glow). He uses the image of reflections in glass to explain the relationship of these aspects of spiritual light to each other. His imagery and flow of thought is somewhat obscure, but his essential meaning is that "it is all one mystery and one light":

The four appearances of light are the radiant (*zohar*) lights which are hidden and concealed. These come into being from the mysterious reality of (God's) Essence, which is also hidden and concealed. . . .

Bahir light is the shining glass (*ispaklaria*), which has the power to reflect. *Zohar* light is a glass that absorbs light. It then cannot be recognized except when it is revealed near a shining light. *Muḥak* light is a shining glass in which the colour of all lights is recognizable. Through its colours, all other glasses are illuminated. Light that receives *zohar* is a glass that does not shine. It receives all the other lights like a reflector that receives the radiance (*zohar*) of the sun, and it can be recognized in it. The same is true of the light that receives *zohar*. This light absorbs all other colours, and they are then visible inside it. When other colours come near it and shine into it, it absorbs

them and gathers them in. The mark of each one is then recognizable in it. This light is more readily revealed, since it is not very bright.

Zohar light, on the other hand, is so bright that the eye cannot grasp it in any way. It is like the light of the sun, which is so intense (*zahir*) that the eye has no power to see it. Light that is less bright, however, can be grasped and revealed, and the eye is able (to see it).

Whoever looks at this colour can recognize the other colours, which are hidden and concealed in it, and which stand over it. Contemplate that the other, higher colours can be recognized inside it. Still, they never appear to be scintillating (*muvhak*) and radiant (*zohar*), since they must be seen through visible light.

The prophets and other enlightened individuals only saw through this light that receives *zohar*, which is the glass that does not shine. What they actually saw, however, was the *zohar*, the shining glass. When you look into the steps, you will find that all is one. Gaze at a candle. You will find the black light at the bottom, and the *bahir* light at the top. But it is all one mystery and one light, and there is no separation whatsoever.

Moses de León, Shekel ha-Kodesh, HCML pp.123–24, in MKAK pp.122–24

See also: **hagah** (8.5).

zǔqiào (C) *Lit.* primordial (*zǔ*) opening (*qiào*); ancestral opening; original opening, cavity, or aperture; in Daoism, the primordial opening where the spirit – purified and concentrated during meditation practice – merges with the primordial Ancestor (*zōngzǔ*, *i.e.* *Dào*); one of a number of synonymous terms, including *xuánguān* (mysterious pass), *xuánqiào* (mysterious opening), and *xuánpìnén* (gateway of the mysterious female).

According to the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th), this “primordial opening” is where the spirit (*shén*) focuses when seeking union with the *Dào*:

Once (the light) is collected, you automatically begin to travel freely without the slightest effort. This is focusing the spirit (*shén*) in the primordial opening (*zǔqiào*), coming together with and uniting with the Inherent (*xiāntiān*).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 8, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Master Zhào Bichén (1860–1942) says that the “inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān zhēnyī zhī qì*)” is one’s true nature, discovered by focusing the attention at the “primordial opening (*zǔqiào*)”. According to the philosophy and practice of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), when the three body energies – vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*) – have been ‘filled up’, the practitioner is able to focus his attention at the “primordial opening (*zǔqiào*)”, where he experiences various forms of inner light:

My brother Kuíyǐzǐ said: “When the vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) are full, they soar up, causing the light of one’s (true) nature (*zhēnxìng*) to manifest; this is the light of the vitality of the one Truth (*zhēnyī*, i.e. *Dào*).”

When bright stars and flashes of light are frequently seen, they herald the mysterious gate (*xuánguān*), which manifests in space before the primordial opening (*zǔqiào*) of spirit. It is the one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*), which is our original face (*běnlái miànmù*), boundless like the Great Void. Hence it is said: “The inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān zhēnyī zhī qì*) arises out of Nothingness (*xūwú*).”

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ; cf. TYAI p.70

Daoist texts demonstrate a difference of opinion concerning whether or not this ‘gate’ or ‘opening’ has a particular location in the human body. Although some authorities, such as Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821), are adamant that the gateway between the physical and the spiritual has no particular place, others have located it in various parts of the body. Thus, Lu K’uan Yü (Charles Luk, *d.* 1978) adds a note to his translation of master Zhào Bìchén’s (1860–1942) *Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ* (‘Light and Instructions on the Secret Way of Original Nature and Spiritual Life’), explaining that *zǔqiào* refers to the point “between and behind the eyes”.¹ Perhaps the apparent difference of opinion can be understood by considering that this subtle “opening” lies in the mind, not in the body. And since the mind cannot be located within the body, nor can the opening. On the other hand, the mind can be focused at various locations within the body, from where the subtle realms can be accessed.

Master Zhào Bìchén devotes an entire chapter of his book to the method of focusing the spirit in the “primordial opening (*zǔqiào*)”. In answer to the question, “Where is it located?”, he replies:

It is at the mind centre between the two eyes. Lǎozǐ calls it ‘the gateway of the mysterious female (*xuánpìn zhī mén*)’,² and he urges people to concentrate on this centre (*shǒuzhōng*) in order to realize the oneness (of all things). In this centre is a pearl, the size of a millet grain, which is the centre between heaven and earth in the human body; it is the opening of the original and primordial Energy (*yuánshǐ zǔqì zhī qiào*). But to know where it lies is insufficient, for it does not include the wondrous light of one’s (original) nature, which is symbolized by a circle. Confucius (Kǒngfūzǐ) called it ‘virtuous perfection (*rén*)’; the *Yìjīng* (‘Book of Changes’) calls it the ‘Limitless (*wújí*)’; the Buddha, called it ‘perfect knowledge (*yuánmíng*)’; and Daoists call it the ‘elixir of immortality (*dān*)’ or the ‘spiritual light (*língguāng*)’. All these point to the inherent one true Energy (*xiāntiān yī zhī zhēnqì*). He who knows this one opening (*yī qiào*) can prepare the elixir of immortality (*jīndān*). Hence it is said: “When the One is attained, all problems are resolved.”

Therefore, during (spiritual) practice, both eyes should turn inward to the centre in order to hold on to this One (*shǒuyī*), which should be held in the primordial opening (*zǔqiào*) of spirit with neither strain nor relaxation. This is called ‘fixing spirit in its primordial opening (*ānshén zǔqiào*)’. This is where one’s (original) nature (*xìng*) is cultivated and the root from which (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) emerges.

My master Liǎo Rán said: “If the primordial opening (*zǔqiào*) of spirit is overlooked, the true Energy (*zhēnxī*) will not remain permanently, spirit will lack a basis for sublimation, the alchemical agent will be incomplete, and the gold elixir (*jīndān*) cannot be produced.”

This opening (*qiào*) is the foundation of (spiritual) stability and the centre of all things, having neither outside nor inside. It cannot be held on to by mindfulness nor sought by mindlessness, because to be mindful of it is clinging to the visible and to be mindless leads to a blank mind. So what sort of practice should be performed (in order to realize it)?

(My master goes on to say:) “The correct method consists of closing both eyes in order to still the mind (*xīn*) so that the primordial opening (*zǔqiào*) can be held onto until the light of one’s (original) nature appears, confirming its effectiveness.

“The practitioner should close his mouth, and touch the palate with the tongue to still the spirit (*shén*) and life energy (*qì*), and to concentrate the attention.” ...

When the spirit is pure, the Great Ultimate (*tàijí*) will be well understood. If one achieves a state in which not a single thought arises, this will in time lead to a state of clarity and purity. In this complete emptiness and utter stillness, a white light will manifest to light up the empty heart (*xūshì*, empty room), and this spiritual (*jīn*, golden) process will emit flashes of light.

Zhào Bìchén, Xīngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ; cf. TYAI pp.4–5

See also: **xuánguān**, **xuánpìn**, **xuánqiào**.

1. Lu K’uan Yü (Charles Luk), *Taoist Yoga*, TYAI p.70.
2. Dàodé jīng 6.

8.3 DEATH AND DYING

DEATH IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS MUST FACE, whatever their beliefs may be. No one disagrees that the way into the world is birth, and the way out is death; yet still ignorance and diversity of opinion prevail concerning the nature of these processes.

Because death is one of the great unknowns, most people are afraid of it, to a greater or lesser extent. Some mystics, however, claim not only to understand the nature of death, but also to know how to go through the process of dying while still living in the body. They also say that for one who has lived a truly spiritual life, death comes as a blessed release of the consciousness from the captivity of the body. To emphasize their point, they speak of existence in the body as 'death', and existence out of the body as true 'life'.

Death and its associated processes constitute the range of topics covered in this section.

ātmaghāta (S), **attaghañña**, **satthaṃ āhareyyaṃ** (Pa) *Lit.* self (*ātmā*) killing (*ghāta*); use (*āhareyyaṃ*) the knife (*satthaṃ*); suicide, self-destruction; a Buddhist term for the deliberate destruction of one's own life; regarded as an unwholesome action, forbidden under the first of the five precepts (S. *pañcha-shīla*) – to refrain from causing harm to living creatures; covered by right action, the fourth component of the noble eightfold path (S. *āryāśṭāṅga-mārga*, Pa. *ariyāṣṭhaṅgika-magga*). Suicide includes assisted suicide or killing oneself by any other means.

The five precepts, to be followed by all Buddhists, are essentially the same in all Buddhist traditions: to refrain from harming living things, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from incorrect speech, and from taking intoxicants. The noble eightfold path consists of: right understanding or right view (Pa. *sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (Pa. *sammā-sankappa*), right speech (Pa. *sammā-vācā*), right action (Pa. *sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (Pa. *sammā-ājīva*), right effort (Pa. *sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (Pa. *sammā-sati*), and right concentration (Pa. *sammā-samādhi*). Right action includes the five precepts.

Buddhism does not generally countenance suicide. In addition to contravening the principle of non-harming, there are two other Buddhist objections to taking one's own life. Firstly, suicide does not lead to an escape either from suffering (Pa. *dukkha*) or from the cycle of birth and death. Pain and suffering are part of an individual's *karma*, which needs to be paid like any other debt. Suicide only defers payment of the debt and adds to the karmic burden, increasing the load and postponing the suffering that led to that frame of mind in the first place. Suicide makes the overall situation worse, not better. Suicide generally arises from a disturbed mind that has become obsessed with itself. A person of pure and serene mind is unlikely to commit suicide; and to die in a state of emotional disturbance is unlikely to lead to a better birth. Suicide is also a cause of grief and suffering to friends and family.

Secondly, human birth is regarded as a rare and precious opportunity to work towards spiritual enlightenment. The Buddha compares the rarity of obtaining human birth to the unlikelihood of a sea turtle that (according to folklore) rises to the surface of the ocean once in a hundred years, coincidentally putting its head through a small hoop that someone had carelessly cast adrift.¹ To end a human life prematurely is to waste this opportunity, which may not come again for many lifetimes.

Despite the general Buddhist rejection of suicide, over the course of Buddhist history, religiously motivated suicide has been practised by members of probably all the various traditions. Even the popular *Lotus Sūtra* relates the undoubtedly apocryphal legend of a *bodhisattva* who “swallowed various perfumes, sandalwood, *kunduruka*, *turushka*, *prikkā*, aloes, and liquidambar gum; and he also drank the fragrant oil of champaka and other kinds of flowers, doing this for a period of fully twelve hundred years.” Following this:

Anointing his body with fragrant oil, he appeared before the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue, wrapped his body in heavenly jewelled robes, poured fragrant oil over his head and, calling on his transcendental powers, set fire to his body. The glow shone forth, illuminating worlds equal in number to the sands of eighty million Ganges rivers. The *buddhas* in these worlds simultaneously spoke out in praise, saying: “Excellent, excellent, good man! This is true diligence. This is what is called a true *Dharma* offering to the Thus Come One (Tathāgata).” ... After they had spoken these words, they each one fell silent. The body of the *bodhisattva* burned for twelve hundred years, and when that period of time had passed, it at last burned itself out.

Lotus Sūtra 23, T9 262:53b7–18, LSOC p.323

Even so, the same *sūtra* maintains throughout that realization of the *Dharma* is the most meritorious sacrifice one can offer. Another legend has the *bodhisattva* Mahāsattva feed himself (out of compassion) as food to a starving tiger and her cubs.²

Following these examples, believing such a death to acquire great merit, self-immolation (C. *shěshēn*, ‘relinquishing the body’) has been practised in the Chinese *Mahāyāna* tradition, together with intentional death by drowning, fasting, and so on. Even in recent times, monks of the Far East have committed suicide by self-immolation in order to draw attention to the maltreatment of Buddhists. The Japanese ritual practise of *seppuku* (cutting the belly), also known as *harakiri*, originally practised by the warrior class (*samurai*), has also been practised by some Buddhists.

Given the Buddhist belief in the sanctity of life, one might have thought that there would be clear doctrinal guidelines condemning suicide. Turning to the earliest Pali texts, however – and bearing in mind that even these texts cannot be regarded as a complete or entirely reliable source of the Buddha’s teachings – it becomes clear that the Buddha’s reported position regarding suicide is surprisingly ambiguous. A number of stories are related. A story concerning the monk Channa, for example, is told in the *Channovāda Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.³ According to the story, Channa is seriously ill and in a great deal of pain. When Sāriputta and Mahā Cunda, two close disciples of the Buddha, go to visit Channa to enquire after his health, he replies that he is in such agony that he has no desire to live and wishes to “use the knife (*satthaṃ āhareyyaṃ*)”, an idiom meaning to kill oneself. In so doing, he adds, he will be blameless, the inference being that he has attained enlightenment (*i.e.* he is an *arahanta*), and as such is not bound by the karmic consequences of his actions. Sāriputta and his friend advise Channa not to commit suicide, reminding him of the Buddha’s teaching that the only way to end suffering is to rise above duality and dependence upon transient things. Nonetheless, after their departure, Channa cuts his throat.

Sāriputta and Mahā Cunda then go to the Buddha and ask him about Channa's fate. The Buddha replies that under normal circumstances suicide is wrong ("blameworthy"), but Channa's statement that he was "blameless" indicated that he was an *arahanta*:

Sāriputta, when one lays down this body and takes up a new body, then I say one is blameworthy. This did not happen in the case of the *bhikkhu* Channa; the *bhikkhu* Channa used the knife blamelessly.

Majjhima Nikāya 144, Channovāda Sutta, PTS3 p.266, MDBB p.1116

The implication of the story is that the suicide of an *arahanta* or of one who attains enlightenment upon killing himself is acceptable. The notion arises from a belief that *arahantas* are not bound by the norms of conventional behaviour because they have risen above the realm of the law of *karma*. Commenting on the same story in the *Samyutta Nikāya*,⁴ the *Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* (commentary) observes that the story indicates that Channa was a *jīvita-samasīsī*, one who simultaneously attains extinction of impurities and the end of life.

A similar story is related in the *Vakkali Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* concerning the monk Vakkali, who is ill and in great pain.⁵ The Buddha visits Vakkali, who admits his unworthiness to the Buddha (at length). He says that he has been wanting to visit the Buddha for a long time, but has been prevented from doing so by his illness. Finally, the Buddha interrupts and comforts him, saying, "Enough, Vakkali. What is there to see in this vile body? Whoever sees the *Dhamma* sees me; whoever sees me sees the *Dhamma*." The Buddha continues with a discourse on the impermanence of all things, and Vakkali acknowledges that the human form of the Buddha is "impermanent".⁶ In the evening, two *devatā* (deities) inform the Buddha that Vakkali is destined for liberation and *nibbāna*. The Buddha therefore sends a group of his disciples to Vakkali to pass on the message of hope and encouragement. Vakkali declares that he has indeed understood the Buddha's message:

I do not doubt that in regard to what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, I have no more desire, lust, or affection.

Samyutta Nikāya 22:87, Vakkali Sutta, PTS3 p.122, CDBB p.940

Soon after, Vakkali "used the knife (*satthaṃ āhareyyaṃ*)" – i.e. killed himself by cutting his throat. On going to the scene with a group of disciples, the Buddha reports that "a cloud of smoke, a swirl of darkness, ... moving to the east, then to the west, to the north, to the south, upwards, downwards, and to the intermediate quarters," is actually *Māra* (the 'devil', symbolizing the essence of negativity, limitation, and illusion), who is looking for the "consciousness of Vakkali". But Vakkali, says the Buddha, has attained *nibbāna*, and has therefore gone beyond *Māra*'s sphere of influence.⁷

Another story of the same kind is related in the *Samyutta Nikāya*⁸ in which the monk Godhika, after great effort in meditation (“diligent, ardent, and resolute”) achieves “temporary liberation of mind”, only to lose it. This happens six times, so upon reaching this state for a seventh time, Godhika decides to “use the knife (*satthaṃ āhareyyaṃ*)” – in order to attain *nibbāna*. Seeing this “within his own mind” and fearful that Godhika will attain *nibbāna*, *Māra* goes to the Buddha and begs him to restrain his disciple from committing suicide. Upon reaching the scene, the Buddha finds that he is too late. *Māra* then says that he has been searching everywhere, but cannot find where Godhika has taken birth. Although he does not condone the suicide, the Buddha replies that this is because Godhika has attained *nibbāna*:

That steadfast man was resolute,
a meditator always rejoicing in meditation,
applying himself day and night
without attachment even to life.

Having conquered the army of Death,
not returning to renewed existence,
having drawn out craving with its root,
Godhika has attained final *nibbāna*.

Samyutta Nikāya 4:23, *Godhika Sutta*, PTSS1 p.122, CDBB pp.214–15

The commentaries fill in the gaps in the story by explaining that the “temporary liberation” attained by Godhika referred to one of the *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption) or higher states of consciousness, and that the reason Godhika had not attained *nibbāna* was due to ill health.⁹

A few other instances of suicide are recorded in the Pali *suttas*, some of which are bizarre in nature. According to one such story, the Buddha gives a discourse at Vesālī on the foulness of the body and the stages of contemplation on the foulness of a corpse. Meditation on foulness (*ashubha bhāvanā*) is a standard Buddhist meditation, designed to detach the mind from the body and reduce the desire for sensual pleasures. The Buddha then goes into seclusion for two weeks. On his return, he discovers that the monks, “repelled, humiliated, and disgusted with this body” have been “using the knife (*satthaṃ āhareyyaṃ*)” at the rate of “ten, twenty, or thirty a day”. Ānanda, who seems undisturbed by the mass suicides, asks the Buddha to teach an alternative method of meditation, and the Buddha obliges. Making no comment on all the deaths, he teaches them mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*).¹⁰

In two other cases, disciples who have become so frustrated with their state of mind (“wracked with lust” after twenty-five years, “distracted and harassed by desires of the senses”)¹¹ and seeming lack of spiritual progress decide to

end it all by committing suicide. But on the brink of killing themselves, they have sudden realizations that set them free. Says one of them:

Reasoned thinking arose in me;
The peril became clear,
disgust with the world was established.
Then my mind was released.

Theragāthā 6:6, Sappadāsa, PTST p.44, EVT1 p.36

A small number of incidents involving suicide are also addressed in the *Vinaya* (monastic code), leading the Buddha to lay down specific rules. One is an extension of the mass-suicide event. In the *Vinaya* version, the monks avoid killing themselves by finding an intermediary to murder them on request.¹² In another instance, a group of monks persuade a virtuous man to kill himself so that he can be assured of a favourable rebirth. Their real motive, however, is to seduce the man's wife. As a result of these incidents, the Buddha creates a rule in which any monk who assists a suicide, extols the beauty of death, or encourages anyone to commit suicide is to be expelled from the *sangha* (community of monks).¹³ Naturally, there would have been no point in ruling that someone who had committed suicide should be expelled from the *sangha*. In another instance, a monk who is tormented by sexual desire throws himself off a cliff. However, he does not die because his fall is broken by another monk, who dies from his injuries.¹⁴ The Buddha again observes that suicide is wrong. Interestingly, the standard commentary on the *Vinaya* does condone bringing about one's own death by ceasing to eat or take medicine towards the end of a long illness or when one has reached an advanced state of meditation.¹⁵ In the latter instance, this may be because breaking off from meditation in order to eat and drink stand in the way of attaining enlightenment. This is similar to the Jain *sallekhanā*, a practice that Buddhists have generally disparaged.

In the attempt to determine the Buddha's attitude to suicide, these few sparsely documented incidents have been subjected to considerable analysis, debate, justification and interpretation both by early commentators and later scholars.¹⁶ It has been suggested, for example, that the Buddha did not condone Channa's suicide, but was simply expressing compassion for him.¹⁷ But on the face of it, although the Buddha explicitly condemns suicide under normal circumstances, it does seem that he might have condoned the suicide of the enlightened or those who were able to attain enlightenment upon killing themselves – although to commit suicide in the hope of attaining enlightenment and thereby avoiding the karmic implications of the act would necessarily be something of a risk.

The nature and setting of these stories and rulings must also be taken into account. Mystics and spiritual teachers have characteristically used stories in a very general manner to illustrate certain points. Only rarely, in the

case of detailed allegories, is it valid to subject every detail of such stories to scrutiny and analysis in the way that later commentators and scholars have done. Moreover, these particular stories are insufficient in their detail to draw anything but the broadest of meanings from them; and as to their historical authenticity, the mythological nature of some of the protagonists, such as *Māra* and the two *devatā*, makes it more than likely that such stories are either entirely fictitious or are embellishments and distortions of some actual incident.

The spiritual point that is made in these stories is that the individuals concerned had become so detached from the world and from their bodies that enlightenment and liberation were of far greater value to them than continued existence in this world. But in no spiritual path, whether Buddhism or otherwise, is it recommended that this should lead to the self-willed action of suicide. Maybe, too, the Buddha taught his disciples how to ‘die while living’ – how to leave the body and pass through the process of death while still living in the body. In fact, experience of the higher *jhānas* as described by the Buddha is essentially the process of leaving the body. But after some time, an understanding of what this means has been lost, and the stories – transmitted orally from one person to another – have been modified according to the understanding of the narrators.

See also: **bardo, death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism.**

1. *Samyutta Nikāya* 56:48, *Chiggala Sutta*, *PTSS5* pp.456–57.
2. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* 18, *T16* 663:354b–355b.
3. *Majjhima Nikāya* 144, *Channovāda Sutta*, *PTSM3* pp.263–66, *MDBB* pp.1114–16.
4. *Samyutta Nikāya* 35:87, *Channa Sutta*, *PTSS4* pp.56–60.
5. *Samyutta Nikāya* 22:87, *Vakkali Sutta*, *PTSS3* pp.119–24; cf. *CDBB* pp.938–41.
6. *Samyutta Nikāya* 22:87, *Vakkali Sutta*, *PTSS3* pp.120–21; cf. *CDBB* p.939.
7. *Samyutta Nikāya* 22:87, *Vakkali Sutta*, *PTSS3* pp.123–24; cf. *CDBB* pp.940–41.
8. *Samyutta Nikāya* 4:23, *Godhika Sutta*, *PTSS1* pp.120–22, *CDBB* pp.212–15.
9. *Sāratthapakāsinī Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, *PTSSA1* p.144ff.; *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā*, *PTSDA1* p.431ff.
10. *Samyutta Nikāya* 54:9, *Asubha Sutta*, *PTSS5* pp.320–22, *CDBB* pp.1773–74.
11. *Theragāthā* 6:6, *PTST* p.44, *KNTB*; *Therīgāthā* 5:4, *Sīhā*, *PTST* p.132, *PEBS* p.54.
12. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *PTSV3* pp.68–71, *BDVI* pp.116–23.
13. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *PTSV3* p.71ff., *BDVI* p.123ff.
14. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *PTSV3* p.82, *BDVI* p.142.
15. *Commentary on Vinaya Piṭaka*, *PTSV3* p.82, in *IBEH* pp.290–91.

16. See e.g. Peter Harvey, *Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, *IBEH* pp.286–310; Michael Attwood, *Suicide as A Response to Suffering*, *SRSA*; Damien Keown, “Buddhism and Suicide,” *BSCC* pp.8–31.
17. See Damien Keown, “Buddhism and Suicide: The Case of Channa,” *BSCC*.

au o te mate (Mo) *Lit.* current (*au*) of death (*mate*); the after-death path that flows downward to the *Pō* (darkness, night).

The concept is mentioned by the New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931), whose primary sources of information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island:

One never hears among the Māori folk any reference to the current of death (*au o te mate*) in connection with the upper spirit world; it flows downward to the *Pō* only. In the days of Māui (a Polynesian mythological hero) and the gods that ceaseless current was established, when the Dawn Maid (*Hine-tītama*) descended into *Rarohenga* (the underworld) and so passed into Night, when *Whiro* (god of evil) retired before *Tāne* the sun god to continue his ceaseless assaults on mankind. Then it was that the current of death by way of *Tahekeroa* (the approach to the descent) was established for all time; ever it flows downward from the *ao mārama* (realm of life and light, this world) to the region of intense darkness, of palpable darkness.

One explanation that occurs in an old recital includes another name for the long descent to the underworld – *Tahekeroa*, another of its names is the ‘broad path of *Tāne*’, of *Rangi* (Sky Father). . . .

The underworld is often alluded to as the *Pō*, a peculiar term that means ‘night’, but also carries the meaning of ‘the unknown’. . . . From this point of view, darkness is inseparably connected with the underworld; also *Whiro* is connected with darkness, and *Hine-tītama* passed downward to Night. At the same time, many myths and other recitals describe the underworld as being a place of light. We must abide by the sacerdotal (priestly) use of the term *Pō* and look upon the underworld as denoting the unknown, the invisible.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.68–69

See also: **mate**, **Rarohenga** (►1), **Rēinga** (►1).

bardo (T), **antarābhava** (S), **zhōngyīn** (C), **chūin** (J) *Lit.* between (*bar*) two (*do*); alternatively derived as ‘suspended (*do*) between (*bar*)’; transition; intermediate state, transitional existence; also written as *bar do*; the intermediate state of existence between death and rebirth, said to last from an instant up

to forty-nine (seven times seven) days or longer, forty-nine having become the traditionally mentioned standard; also, one of the six *dharma*s or *yogas* of Nāropa, involving practices intended to train the meditator to withstand the disorienting experiences of the intermediate state between death and rebirth, giving the trained consciousness an opportunity either to influence the quality of its next birth or to attain liberation altogether from the cycle of birth and death. The Sanskrit *antarābhava* refers to the interval (*antarā*) before coming into birth (*bhava*, existence).

The *bardo* teaching is common to all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, though with some variations and differences. It is also an aspect of the Tibetan *Bön* tradition. It is the primary theme of the teachings found in the *Bardo thos grol chen mo* or *Bardo Thödol Chenmo* ('Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate State'), popularly known in English as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

According to tradition, the original teachings of the *Bardo Thödol* were formulated in the eighth century by the great Tibetan Buddhist master Padmasambhava. It is said that Padmasambhava hid the texts for future discovery since he deemed the people of his time to be unready for such teachings. A hidden text or teaching is known in Tibetan Buddhism as a *terma* (*gter ma*, hidden treasure), and the one who discovers it is called a *tertön*. The traditional belief is that a fourteenth-century *lama* Karma Lingpa found a collection of teachings entitled *Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol* ('Self-Emergence of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities from Enlightened Awareness'), included among which was the *Bardo Thödol*. The book is essentially a manual with detailed instructions on how to prepare for death during one's lifetime and how to guide a dying person as he travels through the *bardo* states.

Bardo as a concept and belief became well known in the West after 1927, when W.Y. Evans-Wentz (1878–1965) – an American theosophist, anthropologist, writer, and pioneer in the study of Tibetan Buddhism and its transmission to the West – published the first English translation of what was to become one of the most famous books on Tibetan Buddhism. Evans-Wentz called it *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Since Evans-Wentz did not speak Tibetan, he engaged Kazi Dawa Samdup, a respected *lama*, English teacher and translator, to translate the text into English. Samdup completed the translation but died before the publication of the book. Evans-Wentz then edited it and added an introduction and commentary, influenced by his own beliefs and perspectives. The English book became so famous that even later Tibetan publications relied upon it, throwing some doubt upon the accuracy and authenticity of the original text as well as the translation. Evans-Wentz held that, despite the traditional story concerning its origins, the *Bardo Thödol* could not have been the work of one person. He believed it to have been a compilation, evolved over time with a number of contributors.¹

When considering the Tibetan notion of *bardo* and rebirth, it is worth bearing in mind that Buddhism gives no credence to an entity known in other

traditions as an eternal ‘self’ or ‘soul’; rather, it teaches the notion of no-soul (*anattā*). What constitutes an individual ‘person’ is an array of thoughts, feelings and perceptions constantly interacting with the body in a dynamic, ever-changing manner. This combination of bodily and mental aspects and faculties – known as the five *skandhas* (aggregates, combinations, the five constituent elements of materio-mental being) – is what is understood to constitute the individual self. Although some aspects of the individual do continue from one life to the next, there is no self that exists independently of the five *skandhas*; nor indeed does the self consist entirely of the five *skandhas*, the union of which is dissolved at death. At death, the essence of this collection of mental energies, influenced entirely by the *karma* of the individual, is reborn as a new, constantly changing ‘individual’. This is contrary to the belief that the same eternal soul reincarnates in a never-ending cycle of body after body. When the flame of one candle is used to light another, it cannot be said that the second flame is exactly the same as the first. Nonetheless, by the same token it cannot be said that the new flame has nothing to do with the first, for the second flame would not have existed were it not for the first. Descriptions, however, are not the reality, but only thoughts and speculations concerning it. A true understanding of death and rebirth, and what actually reincarnates, requires full experience of the matter, and this cannot be adequately expressed in human words and concepts.

According to the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, for most individuals, the period between death and rebirth is a time of confusion, subject to mental projections, somewhat analogous to the dream state. Only *bodhisattvas* who have reached an advanced stage are able to maintain clarity throughout:

Even *bodhisattvas* are deluded in the *bardo* stage,
Even *shrāvakas* are deluded at birth. . . .

Common mortals are confused and deluded when they enter the womb, reside in the womb, and exit from the womb. Celestial kings, thanks to their merits, are awake upon entering the womb, but are confused and deluded when residing in or exiting from the womb. *Shrāvakas* are awake when they enter and reside in the womb; however, they are confused and deluded when they exit from the womb. Only those *bodhisattvas* who have attained insight into the non-origination of all existence (*i.e.* its essential emptiness) are always awake – entering, residing in, and exiting from the womb.

Unattributed Mahāyāna Sūtras; cf. in BWFP p.50

The notion of an intermediate period between death and rebirth is accepted by the Tibetan tantric tradition and by many *Mahāyāna* schools, but is rejected by *Theravāda*. According to the latter, for the majority of people, death is

immediately followed by rebirth, and there is no such thing as an intermediate existence. In the scholarly and analytical tradition of *Theravāda*, it is said that continuity of existence is brought about through a linking of the last conscious moment of one life (Pa. *cuti-citta*) to the first conscious moment of the next. This linking or connecting consciousness is known as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (Pa., S. *pratisaṃdhi-vijñāṇa*).

The controversy has prevailed since the second century (BCE), with various arguments put forward on both sides to substantiate their respective positions. Some maintained that the Buddha only mentions three realms – the realms of desire (*kāma-dhātu*), form (*rūpa-dhātu*), and formlessness (*arūpa-dhātu*) – and that if such an intermediate state had existed, then he would have mentioned it. Others believed that the intermediate state was implied in the expression *antarābhavupāga* (completed existence in the interval), which appears in the *Mahāvāyāna sūtras*.² According to *Mahāvāyāna* philosophy, a sentient being can exist in one of four modes of existence (*chatvāro-bhavāḥ*): *antarābhava* (interval existence, intermediate state between death and rebirth); *upapattibhava* (becoming existence, i.e. taking birth); *pūrvakālabhava* (former-time existence; existence from conception to death, determined by previous births); and *maraṇabhava* (death existence). Some *sūtras* mention seven such states, including *antarābhava*. According to the *Abhidhammakosha Bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu – a commentary on the *Abhidhamma* tradition – one who attains *nirvāṇa* in the *antarābhava* state is called an *antarāparinirvāyīn* (one who attains *nirvāṇa* in the interval), which is a particular category of *anāgāmī* (non-returner) mentioned in the *Theravāda suttas*.³ Pali (*Theravāda*) commentaries explain this as a reference to the interval between birth and mid-life in whatever realm the *anāgāmī* has taken birth⁴ – an explanation that is not especially convincing.

Various durations of the *antarābhava* and *bardo* state are given, from immediate rebirth to seven weeks (seven times seven days). It is also said that every seven days the deceased undergoes a death and reintroduction to the *bardo* state. This represents the passage from one *bardo* state to another. However, there is no particular time passed in the *bardo* states. The entire period can be longer or shorter, and the commonly mentioned period of forty-nine days has only arisen by tradition. Moreover, days – as twenty-four hour periods – are only meaningful in this world. In the *bardo* states, there are no days and nights, and time itself is of an altogether different nature. As in a dream, time becomes an irrelevance. Those who become long-term dwellers in the *bardo* are essentially ghosts.

The subtle being in the transitional state is known as a *gandharva* (fragrance eater), because the *gandharva* is said to subsist on subtle ‘fragrance (*gandha*)’ or energy, rather than solid food. The subtle body of the *gandharva* is made of mind energies (*manomaya-kāya*). This *gandharva*, which is also termed a *bardo*, is equipped with the five subtle aggregates (*skandhas*) of mind and body, together with a divine eye with which it can see past all

obstructions in the search for the parents of its future birth. The five *skandhas* are the five aspects of body and mind that comprise the individuality of a sentient being. At the time of death, the five gross *skandhas* are abandoned for the five subtle *skandhas*.⁵ In Indian mythology, *gandharvas* are a class of semi-divine beings – celestial musicians associated with the deity *Soma*.

Various rituals, with offerings, recitation of *mantras* (at least seven times), prayers for the departed and so on, all intended to help the departed, are performed during the *bardo* period, especially after each successive period of seven days, culminating in a more elaborate ceremony on the forty-ninth day. The number seven is regarded as an auspicious number. The fourth week is also regarded as particularly significant because it is believed that few human beings last longer than this before rebirth. The rituals are led by a Buddhist priest or – preferably – by the *guru* or *lama* of the deceased. Relatives and friends are asked to control their emotions and to refrain from crying, since this is likely to hinder the passage of the deceased.

The *bardo* state is believed to present the dying with a unique opportunity for spiritual transformation, also permitting an influence over the quality of future births. This is because, at the moment of death, the clear light (*'od gsal*) of one's primordial *buddha*-nature is said to manifest, albeit in a brief flash. Recognition of this clear light may permit a well-trained and well-prepared meditator to achieve a complete break from the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*), and thus attain final liberation. For the majority, however, the moment passes unrecognized.

It is also believed that when a person is about to fall asleep, the primordial *buddha*-nature and clear light manifests itself very briefly, but – as in death – it is missed because of spiritual ignorance. For this reason, with proper training, sleep is also regarded as an opportunity for transformation and liberation.

Bardo is used in reference to all transitional states or moments that offer the possibility of enlightenment and liberation. Since all existence in time is essentially transient – to a greater or lesser extent – such *bardo* transitions happen throughout life, as well as after death; but the most intense is the time of death and what happens soon after. In fact, every moment offers the possibility of seeking enlightenment, “as each thought and each emotion arises out of and dies back into the Essence of mind. It is in moments of strong change and transition especially . . . that the true sky-like, primordial nature of our mind will have a chance to manifest.”⁶

According to Tibetan Buddhism, in the *bardo* state immediately following physical death, the consciousness is usually confused, disoriented and subject to a variety of terrifying visions and experiences. These are projected from the mind of the recently deceased, as a result of the *karma* accumulated during many lives and especially the life just passed. In most instances, this state of confusion and terror leads the consciousness into a new birth. But had the individual been trained during life on how to manoeuvre calmly in the *bardo*, he would have been in a much better position either to attain liberation or to

direct himself into a new birth in one of the better three of the six possible realms of rebirth, as understood by Buddhist cosmology. The six realms, in descending order, are those of gods, demigods, human beings, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell beings.

Descriptions of and commentary on the various *bardo* states varies from school to school and text to text, and details are sometimes contradictory. Kalu Rinpoche (1905–1989) of the *Kagyü* school, one of the first Tibetan *lamas* to teach in the West, describes the experiences of *bardo* in general terms. In this context, *srid pa'i bardo* refers to the entire *bardo* period:

During the first week or two of the *srid pa'i bardo* – the first third of it – the impressions that arise in the mind of the deceased person are very largely related to his or her previous existence. If a man dies, he will have the impression during this part of the *srid pa'i bardo* of being a man, with his own former personality and state of existence; a woman will have the impression of still being a female existence, and so forth. In each case there will be impressions relating back to the previous life. This is why the consciousness of a *bardo* being is said to experience returning to its former home and being able to see in some way, but usually not to make contact with, the people it left behind. There will be the experience of arriving at the home and of announcing, “I’m here; I’m home again.” But then there will be a feeling of not being able to make contact with the people still living there, and this can produce intense pain, frustration, and rage. Or the understanding that one has died may arise, and that trauma can produce immediate unconsciousness: the shock is too great to endure and the mind simply blanks out.

After the first week or two of the after-death experience, the impressions one has of a body and an environment begin to relate more and more to the future existence towards which one is being impelled by one’s *karma*. The actual length of the *srid pa'i bardo* experience varies a great deal from person to person. In general terms, the longest period is held to be roughly forty-nine days.

Kalu Rinpoche, The Dharma that Illuminates, DISM pp.18–19

Sogyal Rinpoche (b.1947) confirms that it is quite possible that, to begin with, the deceased may not have realized that he has died:

During the first weeks of the *bardo*, we have the impression that we are a man or woman, just as in our previous life. We do not realize that we are dead. We return home to meet our family and loved ones. We try to talk to them, to touch them on the shoulder. But they do not reply or even show they are aware we are there. As hard as we try,

nothing can make them notice us. We watch, powerless, as they weep or sit stunned and heartbroken over our death. Fruitlessly we try to make use of our belongings. Our place is no longer laid at table, and arrangements are being made to dispose of our possessions. We feel angry, hurt and frustrated, “like a fish”, says the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, “writhing on hot sand”.⁷

If we are very attached to our body, we may even try, in vain, to re-enter or hover around it. In extreme cases the mental body can linger near its possessions or body for weeks or even years; and still it may not dawn on us we are dead. It is only when we see that we cast no shadow, make no reflection in the mirror, no footprints on the ground, that finally we realize; and the sheer shock of recognizing we have died can be enough to make us faint away.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.293–94

The *bardo* states, classified in various ways by different schools and texts, are generally listed as four or six. The *Bardo Thödol* lists the four traditionally mentioned *bardo* states and the two additional ones.⁸ The first three states relate to human existence; the remaining three to the after-death state.

1. *Rang bzhin skyes gnas bar do*. The *bardo* of waking life, which encompasses one’s entire lifespan, with its full complement of joy and suffering. This is the time and opportunity for spiritual practice. A single lifespan is fleeting, lasting briefly in the total scheme of things, but it is regarded by spiritual masters as a precious opportunity to prepare for death. It is the interval between birth and death. According to the *Bardo Thödol*:

Now that the *bardo* of this life is dawning upon me,
I will abandon laziness for which there is no time in life,
and enter, undistracted, upon the path of listening and hearing,
reflection, meditation, and contemplation, . . .
and realize the enlightened mind.

Now that I have attained this precious human body,
there is no time to remain on the path of a wandering mind.

Bardo Thödol; cf. TBDG p.32, TBDT p.151

With your mind far off, thinking that death will never come,
entranced by the pointless activities of life,
mistaken indeed would be your purpose
if you returned empty-handed now.

Recognize that what you truly need is the sacred *dharma* (teachings) –
so why not practise the *dharma* starting from this very moment?

From the mouths of *siddhas* (adepts) come these words:
 If you do not keep your *guru*'s teaching in your heart
 will you not be a traitor to your own self?

Bardo Thödol; cf. *TBDG* p.34, *TBDT* pp.153–54, *TBDW* p.204

2. *Rmi lam bar do*. The *bardo* of dreaming; the state between waking and deep sleep; the basis of the practice of dream *yoga*, one of the six *dharma*s of Nāropa. See **rmi lam** (8.5).

3. *Bsam gtan bar do*. The *bardo* of meditation; time out from normal waking consciousness in which the mind rests in internal concentration (*samādhi*).

4. '*Chi kha'i bar do*. The *bardo* of dying; first of the three after-death *bardo* states. The process of death itself is described in the *Bardo Thödol* as a gradual dissolution of the human constitution of bodily and mental energies. Some Tibetan medical texts describe this process in considerable detail, depicting the way in which the elements (*tattvas*) that comprise the body dissolve, the one below into the one above, until the consciousness departs from the body.⁹

At the moment of final bodily dissolution and the falling away of the external world, the dying person has the opportunity to realize the true nature of the mind as the clear light or innate luminous Reality. This revelation is said to manifest in a sequence of eight visions. If the opportunity is lost, the deceased becomes unconscious for three or four days, during which time a subtle 'consciousness' body (the *gandharva*) is formed, through which the remaining *bardo* states are experienced. Not all authorities agree that liberation at such time is possible. Tsongkhapa maintains:

The saying: "At the beginning stage of *bardo*, one may attain buddhahood," is erroneous. The teachings found in the recognized holy books have never said that this attainment in the *bardo* state may be accomplished before the completion of the death-birth process. The saying should be interpreted as a reference to the attainment of buddhahood during one's lifetime, not during the actual *bardo* stage.

Tsongkhapa, On the Six Yogas of Nāropa; cf. *ETTT* p.230

For the majority of people, the process of death is described as painful because it entails forcible detachment of the life force from the body and all material attachments. One who has prepared for this moment, however, willingly discards both:

Now that the *bardo* of the moment of death dawns upon me,
 I will abandon all attachment, craving, and worldly inclination,

and enter undistracted into clear awareness of the teaching,
 and eject my consciousness
 into the space of unborn *rig pa* (pure awareness).
 As I leave this compound body of flesh and blood,
 I will know it to be a transitory illusion.

Bardo Thödol; cf. *TBDG* p.33, *TBDT* p.152

“Ejecting the consciousness into the space of unborn *rig pa* (essential, primordial awareness)” refers to the transference of consciousness, the *'pho ba* practice, which is the most commonly used practice for dying, and the special instruction associated with the *bardo* of dying. *'Pho ba* is a practice of *yoga* and meditation that has been used for centuries to help the dying and to prepare for death. The principle is that at the moment of death, the practitioner ejects his or her consciousness and merges it with the wisdom mind of the Buddha, in what Padmasambhava calls “the space of unborn *rig pa*”. This practice can be carried out by the individual, or effected by a qualified master or good practitioner on the individual’s behalf.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.236

5. *Chos nyid bar do*. The *bardo* of Reality; the *bardo* of the true nature of absolute Reality (T. *chos nyid*, S. *dharmatā*), in which absolute Reality manifests in the form of celestial lights and sounds, and peaceful and wrathful deities; second of the three after-death *bardo* states. According to the *Bardo Thödol*, this *bardo* lasts fourteen days, during which time the deceased experiences visions of forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities (one hundred in all), who appear amidst a display of light and sound. In very general terms, the peaceful deities represent the *shūnyatā* (emptiness) aspect of Reality, while the wrathful deities represent the aspect of radiance and luminosity. If the deceased fails to recognize them as such, then he enters the next *bardo*, the *bardo* of becoming. The deities are understood as projections of the mind of the deceased, and their content relates to the experience of those who believe in them. Those of other religious and cultural backgrounds will have corresponding experiences that originate from the content of their particular minds:

Now as the *bardo* of absolute Reality (*dharmatā*) dawns upon me,
 I will abandon even the merest trace of terror, awe, and fear.
 I will recognize that whatever appears
 is a projection of my own *rig pa*,
 and know it to be a visionary phenomenon of this *bardo*;

Now that I have reached this crucial point,
 I will not fear the assembly of peaceful and wrathful deities,
 which are the projections of my own mind.

Bardo Thödol; cf. TBDG p.33, TBDT p.153

Like the first after-death *bardo*, navigating the experiences of this *bardo* is greatly helped by having practised suitable techniques of meditation during life. In the case of the *Dzogchen* tradition of the *Nyingma* school, *thod rgal* (direct crossing) practices are recommended. The intention of these practices is to bring about spontaneous realization of the primordial and pristine awareness (*rig pa*) that is the foundation of all things.

According to Sogyal Rinpoche, *Dzogchen* texts describe the *bardo* of *dharmatā* as having four phases that can only be understood in conjunction with advanced *thod rgal* practices. The *Bardo Thödol* itself does not provide a clear distinction between these phases. The four phases are those of light, then of the deities, then of wisdom, and lastly of “spontaneous presence” in which, “the whole of Reality presents itself in one tremendous display.” Sogyal Rinpoche prefaces his description of these four phases with the comment:

I must stress, however, that all words could possibly do is give some conceptual picture of what might happen in the *bardo* of *dharmatā*. The appearances of this *bardo* will remain just conceptual images until the practitioner has perfected the *thod rgal* practice, when each detail of the description I am about to give becomes an undeniable personal experience. What I am trying to give you here is some sense that such a marvellous and amazing dimension could exist, and to complete my description of the whole of the *bardos*. I also profoundly hope that this complete description could act perhaps as some kind of reminder when you go through the process of death.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.280

He goes on to describe the four phases. The first is “luminosity – the landscape of light”:

In the *bardo* of *dharmatā*, you take on a body of light. The first phase of this *bardo* is when ‘space dissolves into luminosity’.

Suddenly you become aware of a flowing vibrant world of sound, light, and colour. All the ordinary features of our familiar environment have melted into an all-pervasive landscape of light. This is brilliantly clear and radiant, transparent and multicoloured, unlimited by any kind of dimension or direction, shimmering and constantly in motion. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* calls it “like a mirage on a plain in the heat of summer”.¹⁰ Its colours are the natural expression of the intrinsic

elemental qualities of the mind: space is perceived as blue light, water as white, earth as yellow, fire as red, and wind as green.

How stable these dazzling appearances of light are in the *bardo* of *dharmatā* depends entirely upon what stability you have managed to attain in *thod rgal* practice. Only a real mastery of this practice will enable you to stabilize the experience and so use it to gain liberation. Otherwise the *bardo* of *dharmatā* will simply flash by like a bolt of lightning; you will not even know that it has occurred. Let me stress again that only a practitioner of *thod rgal* will be able to make the all-important recognition: that these radiant manifestations of light have no existence separate from the nature of mind.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.280

The second phase is that of “luminosity dissolving into union”. Here, the light manifests as celestial beings – *buddhas* and deities:

If you are unable to recognize this (luminosity) as the spontaneous display of *rig pa*, the simple rays and colours then begin to integrate and coalesce into points or balls of light of different sizes, called *thig le* (S. *bindu*, drop, sphere, or focus of *prāṇa*). Within them the “*maṇḍalas* of the peaceful and wrathful deities” appear, as enormous spherical concentrations of light seeming to occupy the whole of space.

This is the second phase, known as ‘luminosity dissolving into union’, where the luminosity manifests in the form of *buddhas* or deities of various size, colour and form, holding different attributes. The brilliant light they emanate is blinding and dazzling, the sound is tremendous, like the roaring of a thousand thunderclaps, and the rays and beams of light are like lasers, piercing everything.

These are the forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities depicted in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. They unfold over a certain period of ‘days’, taking on their own characteristic *maṇḍala* pattern of fivefold clusters. This is a vision that fills the whole of your perception with such intensity that if you are unable to recognize it for what it is, it appears terrifying and threatening. Sheer fear and blind panic can consume you, and you faint.

From yourself and from the deities, very fine shafts of light stream out, joining your heart with theirs. Countless luminous spheres appear in their rays, which increase and then ‘roll up’, as the deities all dissolve into you.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.281

The third phase of the fifth *bardo* is that in which various aspects of mystical wisdom are manifested, though not the pure wisdom of enlightenment:

If again you fail to recognize and gain stability (in the second phase), the next phase unfolds, called ‘union dissolving into wisdom’.

Another fine shaft of light springs out from your heart and an enormous vision unfolds from it; however, every detail remains distinct and precise. This is the display of the various aspects of wisdom, which appear together in a show of unfurled carpets of light and resplendent spherical luminous *thig les*.

First, on a carpet of deep blue light appear shimmering *thig les* of sapphire blue, in patterns of five. Above that, on a carpet of white light, appear radiant *thig les*, white like crystal. Above, on a carpet of yellow light, appear golden *thig les*, and upon that a carpet of red light supports ruby-red *thig les*. They are crowned by a radiant sphere like an outspread canopy made of peacock feathers.

This brilliant display of light is the manifestation of the five wisdoms: wisdom of all-encompassing space, mirror-like wisdom, equalizing wisdom, wisdom of discernment, and all-accomplishing wisdom. But since the all-accomplishing wisdom is only perfected at the time of enlightenment, it does not appear yet. Therefore there is no green carpet of light and *thig les*, yet it is inherent within all the other colours. What is being manifested here is our potential for enlightenment, and the all-accomplishing wisdom will only appear when we become a *buddha*.

If you do not attain liberation here through resting undistracted in the nature of mind, the carpets of light and their *thig les*, along with your *rig pa*, all dissolve into the radiant sphere of light, which is like the canopy of peacock feathers.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.281–82

Finally, in the fourth phase, there is an opportunity to recognize the radiance of the essential Reality:

This heralds the final phase of the *bardo* of *dharmatā*, ‘wisdom dissolving into spontaneous presence’. Now the whole of Reality presents itself in one tremendous display. First the state of primordial purity dawns like an open, cloudless sky. Then the peaceful and wrathful deities appear, followed by the pure realms of the *buddhas*, and below them the six realms of samsaric existence.

The limitlessness of this vision is utterly beyond our ordinary imagination. Every possibility is presented: from wisdom and liberation to confusion and rebirth. At this point you will find yourself endowed with powers of clairvoyant perception and recollection. For example, with total clairvoyance and your senses unobstructed, you will know your past and future lives, see into others’ minds, and have knowledge of all six realms of existence. In an instant you will vividly

recall whatever teachings you have heard, and even teachings you have never heard will awaken in your mind.

The entire vision then dissolves back into its original Essence, like a tent collapsing once its ropes are cut.

If you have the stability to recognize these manifestations as the ‘self-radiance’ of your own *rig pa*, you will be liberated. But without the experience of *thod rgal* practice, you will be unable to look at the visions of the deities, which are “as bright as the sun”.¹¹ Instead, as a result of the habitual tendencies of your previous lives, your gaze will be drawn downward to the six realms. It is those that you will recognize, and which will lure you again into delusion.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.282

The *Bardo Thödol* describes in some detail the appearance and interaction of these fantastical coloured lights, sounds, and deities. But all of them are to be understood as the naturally radiated, enlightened energy or expression of the primordial mind Essence – of the *buddha*-nature. The forms they take are manifestations of one’s own mind, and should engender no more fear than a “stuffed lion”.¹² If, by virtue of meditation practised during life, the deceased recognizes them as such, then it is said that liberation can be attained.

The one hundred deities are comprised of the *dhyāni buddhas* of the five *buddha* families together with their female consorts, their associated *bodhisattvas*, the *buddhas* of the six realms, and several wrathful and protective deities. Each *buddha* family represents particular aspects of the primordial *buddha*-nature. The manifestations of the lights and deities experienced by the deceased are regarded as expressions of these aspects of the *buddha*-nature. However, in a human being, these aspects of the *buddha*-nature are impure, implying that they are mixed with spiritual ignorance and all the resultant human imperfections and characteristics. This impurity cloaks the essential *buddha*-nature with aspects of the human material and mental constitution.

Thus, for instance, the head of the *padma-kula* (lotus family) of *buddhas* is Amitābha, regarded as the embodiment of compassion, universal love and the discriminating awareness and clear perception that sees unerringly into the individual nature of all beings and all things. Amitābha is associated with the colour red, the direction west, the fire element, speech, the faculty of recognition, and nose consciousness (faculty of smell). Similarly Ratnasambhava, head of the *ratna-kula* (jewel family), is understood to be the embodiment of ‘equalizing-wisdom (*samatā-jñāna*)’, which is a deep awareness of the essential equality and sameness in all things, of the universal nature of all *dharma*s (teachings) as well as all phenomena. He is the epitome of generosity and compassion, and is associated with the colour yellow, the direction south, the water element, feelings of happiness, and ear consciousness (faculty of hearing).

To grasp a psychology and metaphysics that is expressed in terms of deities, energies, colours, *maṇḍalas*, mental function, and types of perception and consciousness is not so easy. Even so, the extensive and complex symbolism relating these deities to the functioning of human nature, enlightened and unenlightened, is familiar to the Tibetan tantric mindset. Hence, when a particular *buddha* or *buddha*-family is mentioned, it is automatically understood to encompass those aspects of the *buddha*-nature and materio-mental aspects of the human constitution with which that *buddha*-family is associated.

This way of thinking is apparent in descriptions of the *bardo* states, and it is only with an understanding of this symbolism that it is possible to make any sense out of the more colourful passages in the *Bardo Thödol*. Speaking, for example, of the appearance of the celestial *buddha* Ratnasambhava, the *Bardo Thödol* explains:

O child of *buddha*-nature, listen without distraction!

On the third day, a yellow light will arise, which is the pure essence of the earth element. At the same time, from the yellow southern *buddha*-field (heaven), known as ‘the Glorious’, the Buddha Ratnasambhava will appear before you. His body is yellow in colour; he holds a wish-fulfilling jewel in his hand; he presides upon a throne borne up by horses; and he is in the embrace of his supreme female consort, *Māmakī*. He is accompanied by two male *bodhisattvas* Ākāśhagarbha and Samantabhadra, and two female *bodhisattvas* Mālā and Dhūpa, so that six *buddha*-bodies appear before you from within the space of rainbow light.

The inherent purity of the *skandha* of sensation (which is the ‘wisdom of sameness’) – a brilliant yellow light adorned with *thig les* of light both large and small, radiant and clear, and unbearable to the eyes – will stream towards you from the heart of Ratnasambhava and his consort, and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to gaze at it.

At the same time, together with the light of wisdom, the dull blue light of the human realm will come before you and pierce your heart. Driven by pride, you will then flee in panic from the intensity of the yellow light, but will find delight in the dull blue light of the human realm, and will be attracted to it. At this moment, have no fear of the intensity of the yellow light in all its brilliant radiance, but recognize it as wisdom. Let your *rig pa* rest in it, relaxed, at ease, in a state of non-activity. Have faith in it, and let yourself be drawn to it with longing and devotion. If you recognize it as the natural radiance of your own *rig pa*, even though you do not feel devotion and have not repeated the necessary prayer of inspiration, you will merge inseparably with all the *buddha*-bodies and rays of light, and will attain buddhahood.

If you do not recognize it as the natural radiance of your own *rig pa*, then pray to it with devotion, thinking, “This is the light of the compassionate energy of Buddha Ratnasambhava; I take refuge in it.” And feel longing for it, because it is the Buddha Ratnasambhava come to escort you through the fearsome dangers of the *bardo*; it is the absorbing, protective, and guiding light of his compassionate energy.

Do not delight in the dull blue light of the human realm. That is the seductive path of habitual tendencies, which you have accumulated through deep-seated pride. If you are attracted to it, you will tumble down into the human realm, where you will experience the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death, and you will miss the chance of escaping from the swamp of *samsāra*. This (dull blue light) is an obstacle blocking the path to liberation, so do not look at it, but abandon pride! Abandon your habitual tendencies! Do not be attracted to it! Do not yearn for it! Feel devotion and longing for the brilliant, radiant yellow light. Focus with one-pointed concentration on the Buddha Ratnasambhava and say this prayer of inspiration:

When through deep-seated pride, I wander in *samsāra* –
 May the Buddha Ratnasambhava go before me
 on the path of radiant light,
 which is the ‘wisdom of sameness’;
 May the supreme female consort *Māmakī*
 support me from behind;
 May they escort me through the dangerous straits of the *bardo*,
 and bring me to perfect buddhahood.

By repeating this prayer of inspiration with deep devotion, you will dissolve into the rainbow light in the heart of the Buddha Ratnasambhava and his consort, and become a *sambhoga-kāya* (body of bliss, celestial body) *buddha* in the southern *buddha*-field known as ‘the Glorious’.

Bardo Thödol; cf. *TBDG* pp.67–69, *TBDT* pp.240–41,
TBDR pp.137–38, in *TLDS* pp.286–87

6. *Srid pa'i bar do*. The *bardo* of existence or becoming (*srid pa*) in which the force of *karma* propels the individual towards his next birth; third and last of the after-death *bardo* states. During the previous *bardo* states, the deceased has had the opportunity to realize the clear light and find liberation and *nirvāṇa*. Should liberation not be attained, the remaining time is passed seeking a place of rebirth in one or other of the six realms, under the influence of past *karma*. In fact, for the majority, death provides only a momentary opportunity to seek Reality, followed by rebirth. Sogyal Rinpoche says that “the experience of death, for most people, will simply mean passing into a

state of oblivion at the end of the process of dying.”¹³ The first two *bardo* states pass by unrecognized, and the deceased subsequently awakens into the third *bardo*, which generally culminates in rebirth.

During the *bardo* of becoming, the deceased reviews the actions of his past life, able to recall details long forgotten, even those of seemingly no significance. As in a dream or a nightmare, all experiences seem real, yet they are only projections of the mind. According to the *Bardo Thödol*, “At this time, the great tornado of *karma*, terrifying, unbearable, whirling fiercely, will drive you from behind.”¹⁴ Or as Sogyal Rinpoche describes it:

Consumed by fear, blown to and fro like dandelion seeds in the wind, we roam, helpless, through the gloom of the *bardo*. Tormented by hunger and thirst, we seek refuge here and there. Our mind’s perceptions change every moment, projecting us, “like out of a catapult”,¹⁵ says the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, into alternate states of sorrow or joy. Into our minds comes the longing for a physical body, and yet we fail to find one, which plunges us into further suffering.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.294–95

The ‘body’ in this state is made entirely of mind energies, and its direction is completely influenced by its past *karma*. Kalu Rinpoche takes up the description:

All this is merely a projection of mind.... Because the *bardo* consciousness has no physical basis, a being in the after-death state is not subject to the normal physical limitations. No mountains, walls, oceans or forests present barriers to the consciousness in the *bardo*. Whatever arises in the mind is directly experienced, and wherever the mind decides to go, it goes.... It transcends the ordinary physical limitations and the properties of the world we’re used to. However, it is an entirely automatic or blind result of our previous actions or *karma*, and nothing that occurs here is a conscious decision on the part of the being; we are simply buffeted around by the force of *karma*.

Kalu Rinpoche, The Dharma that Illuminates, DISM p.18

It is, continues Kalu Rinpoche, as automatic as the development of a child. The child does not have to think or say, “Tomorrow I am going to grow this much. The next day I am going to grow that much.” All the processes of rebirth are determined automatically by past *karma*. Sogyal Rinpoche provides more detail:

In the *bardo* of becoming, the *buddha*-realms do not appear spontaneously as they do in the *bardo* of *dharmatā*. Just by remembering

them, however, you can transfer yourself there directly by the power of your mind, and proceed toward enlightenment. It is said that if you can invoke a *buddha*, he will immediately appear before you. But remember, even though the possibilities are limitless, we must have at least some, if not total, control over our mind in this *bardo*; and this is extremely difficult, because the mind here is so vulnerable, fragmented, and restless.

So in this *bardo*, whenever you can suddenly retrieve your awareness, even for a moment, immediately recall your connection with spiritual practice, remember your master or *buddha*, and invoke them with all your strength. If in life you have developed the natural reflex of praying whenever things become difficult, or critical or slip beyond your control, then instantly you will be able to invoke or call to mind an enlightened being, such as Buddha or Padmasambhava, Tāra or Avalokiteshvara, Christ or the Virgin Mary. If you are able to invoke them fervently with one-pointed devotion, and with all your heart, then through the power of their blessing, your mind will be liberated into the space of their wisdom mind. Prayer in this life may seem sometimes to bring little result, but its effects in the *bardo* are unprecedentedly powerful.

Yet the description I have given you of the *bardo* shows the sheer difficulty of focusing the mind at this juncture, if we have had no previous training. Think how almost impossible it is to remember something like a prayer in a dream or nightmare, how impotent and powerless we feel in them; in the *bardo* of becoming it is just as hard, if not harder, to collect our thoughts at all. This is why the watchword of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, repeated over and over again, is: “Do not be distracted.”

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.294–95

Though the deceased has no power at this stage to change the mental trend established during life, the *Bardo Thödol* still provides a hint of hope and encouragement:

Now when the *bardo* of becoming (*i.e.* rebirth) dawns upon me,
 I will concentrate my mind one-pointedly,
 and strive to prolong the potency of good *karma*;
 Blocking the entrance to rebirth,
 I will try to keep from being reborn.
 This is the time when courage and pure thought are needed:
 I will abandon jealousy, and meditate upon my *guru* and his consort.

Bardo Thödol; cf. TBDG pp.33–34, TBDT p.153, in TLDS p.302

As the deceased progresses through the *bardo* states, he longs increasingly for the stability of a body, and he is drawn inexorably towards a body and a destiny that will manifest his *karma*. In the Buddhist scheme of things, this may be in any of the six realms of existence – of gods, demigods, human beings, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell beings. Of these, rebirth in the heavenly realms of gods and demigods is the result of a spiritual life or of a life well-lived:

Lights of various colours shine from the six realms of existence, and you will feel drawn toward one or another, depending on the negative emotion that is predominant in your mind. Once you have been drawn into one of these lights, it is very difficult to turn back. Then images and visions will arise, linked to the different realms.... Some say that if you are to be reborn as a god, you will have a vision of entering a heavenly palace with many storeys. If you are to be reborn as a demigod, you will feel you are amidst spinning circular weapons of fire, or going onto a battlefield. If you are to be reborn as an animal, you find yourself in a cave, a hole in the ground, or a nest made of straw. If you have a vision of a tree stump, a deep forest or a woven cloth, you are to be reborn as a hungry ghost. And if you are to be reborn in hell, you will feel you are being led, powerless, into a black pit, down a black road, into a sombre land with black or red houses, or toward a city of iron.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.299

Various texts add to the detail. Tibetan medical *tantras* provide a detailed description of the manner in which the father's sperm, the mother's ovum, and the consciousness seeking birth unite. This is said to set in motion the development of the embryo through the formation of an 'indestructible drop' that remains in the heart *chakra* until the time of death. Included are considerable details of how the subtle elements (*tattvas*), the primary and subsidiary channels (*nāḍīs*) of *prāṇa*, the *chakras* and so on contribute to the formation of the various bodily organs and systems in the developing embryo.¹⁶ Whether this is based on intuition, direct mystical observation of the process, metaphysical speculation founded on an understanding of pranic and tattvic functioning, or a combination of these remains uncertain.

Unique to Tibetan tantrism is the notion of the *tulku* (*sprul sku*), a *lama* who is so much in control of his passage through the three after-death *bardo* states that he can choose the most beneficial circumstances for his rebirth in order to continue his work in aiding sentient beings towards enlightenment. The *Dalai Lama*, the *Panchen Lama* and the *Karmapa* are examples of high-ranking *lamas* who take successive rebirths and who are 'found' by other *lamas* of their tradition and are re-appointed to the same position within their lineage while still at an early age. At the present time, over 2,000 *tulkus*

are known, although the number before the mid-twentieth-century Chinese invasion of Tibet was more than twice that number. The tradition of the *tulku* as the serial emanation or reincarnation of a *lama* evolved during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

The after-death *bardo* states are often related to the *Mahāyāna* concept of the ‘three bodies (*trikāya*)’ of a *buddha*. These are: his physical, human form or transformation body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*), which manifests in this world to teach beings the path to enlightenment; his subtle or utter-delight body (*sambhoga-kāya*) – a celestial and blissful form seen as the result and reward of spiritual practice; and his cosmic or all-inclusive form, the *dharmakāya* or *dharmā* body (Truth or Reality body), which is one with everything, unmanifested, and free of all qualities, characteristics, and distinctions.

Hence, the *bardo* of dying is sometimes called the *dharmakāya bardo*, because this is the first opportunity given to the dying person to apprehend Reality. However, Tsongkhapa cautions that the *dharmakāya* experienced at this time is only a reflection, “the *dharmakāya* with which there is the so-called merging at the time of death is by no means the real *dharmakāya*, but a similar one.”¹⁷ Likewise, the *bardo* of *dharmatā* is sometimes called the *sambhoga-kāya bardo*, because the deceased exists in a subtle body, and experiences the manifestation of the deities in their celestial, *sambhoga-kāya* forms. Lastly, the *bardo* of becoming is also known as the *nirmāṇa-kāya bardo* because this is the *bardo* in which the deceased descends to rebirth and embodied, human existence.

Death is inevitable, and those who have learned its secrets are in an enviable position. Such beings even look forward to their death as a final release from the realms of rebirth. In the Tibetan tradition, an example of the longing for death, and the joy of dying when well prepared for it, is found in *The Immaculate Radiance*, the last testament of the fourteenth-century *Dzogchen* master Longchenpa:

In a cloudless night sky, the full moon,
the Lord of Stars is about to rise. . . .
The face of my compassionate lord, Padmasambhava,
draws me on, radiating its tender welcome.

My delight in death is far, far greater
than the delight of traders at making vast fortunes at sea,
or the lords of the gods who vaunt their victory in battle,
or of those sages who have entered the rapture of perfect absorption.
So just as a traveller who sets out on the road
when the time has come to go,
I will not remain in this world any longer,
but will go to dwell in the stronghold
of the great bliss of deathlessness.

This, my life, is finished, my *karma* is exhausted,
 what benefit prayers could bring has worn out:
 All worldly things are done with, this life's show is over.
 In one instant, I will recognize
 the very essence of the manifestation of my being
 in the pure, vast realms of the *bardo* states;
 I am close now to taking up my seat
 in the ground of primordial perfection.

The riches found in myself have made the minds of others happy,
 I have used the blessing of this life
 to realize all the benefits of the island of liberation;

Having been with you, my noble disciples, through all this time,
 the joy of sharing the truth has filled me and satisfied me.
 Now all the connections in this life between us are ending:
 I am an aimless beggar who is going to die as he likes;
 Do not feel sad for me, but go on praying always.

These words are my heart talking, talking to help you:
 Think of them as a cloud of lotus blossoms,
 and you in your devotion as bees plunging into them,
 to suck from them their transcendent joy.

Through the great good of these words,
 may the beings of all the realms of *saṃsāra*,
 in the ground of primordial perfection, attain *nirvāṇa*.

Longchenpa, The Immaculate Radiance, in TLDS pp.344–45

See also: **Nā ro chos drug** (8.5), **'pho ba**.

1. See W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, TBDW p.77; Bryan Cuevas, *Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, HHTD pp.3–5.
2. E.g. Moggaliputta Tissa, *Kathāvatthu* 8:2, PTSK1 pp.363–64; see Bryan Cuevas, *Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, HHTD pp.40–41.
3. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:131 (*Samyojana Puggala Sutta*), 7:55 (*Purisagati Sutta*), PTSA2 p.134, PTSA4 pp.70–71.
4. E.g. *Manorathapūraṇī Anguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, PTSAA2 p.350, PTSAA4 p.39; *Sāratthapakāsinī Saṃyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, PTSSA2 p.143.
5. E.g. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Shāstra* 22:5.2, T25 1509:149b–c, TVW2 pp.589–90.
6. Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, TLDS p.109.

7. *Bardo Thödol*, *TBDG* p.277.
8. For many of these details, see Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, *TLDS* pp.263–302, *passim*.
9. See Robert Beer, *Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, *ETSM* p.141.
10. *Bardo Thödol*; cf. *TBDG* p.236.
11. *Bardo Thödol*; cf. *TBDG* p.140.
12. *Bardo Thödol*, *TBDG* p.263.
13. Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, *TLDS* p.291.
14. *Bardo Thödol*, *TBDT* p.294.
15. *Bardo Thödol*; cf. *TBDG* pp.282, 302.
16. See Robert Beer, *Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, *ETSM* pp.139–41.
17. Tsongkhapa, *On the Six Yogas of Nāropa*, *ETTT* p.230.

ba'th (A), **ba's** (P) *Lit.* to send, as in to send a prophet or a messenger; also, to rise, to awaken, to revive; hence, resurrection, doomsday, the Day of Resurrection; thus, *ba'th al-mawt* (awakening after death) and *ba'thah* (raising, awakening, sending; prophetic mission or appointment); related to *al-Bā'ith* (the Sender, the Raiser, the Resurrector), one of the ninety-nine names of *Allāh*. See **resurrection (in Islam)** (8.4).

chéng hè (C) *Lit.* to mount or ride (*chéng*) a crane (*hè*); hence, to fly on a crane; metaphorically, to die; a Daoist metaphor for an adept's death to the physical realm and ascent to spiritual realms while still living in the body; synonymous with *qíhè*. In Chinese mythology, the crane (*hè*) lives for a thousand years and is a symbol of immortality. Daoist sages and immortals are often depicted riding on a crane.

Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) concludes a lengthy poem by confirming that, if his instructions are followed, the adept will die to this world and ascend to spiritual heights:

I bow to the disciples of *Quánzhēn* (a Daoist school).
 Remember the words I say:
 If you truly commit and devote yourself,
 then you have the reins of the basics.
 As to what is next after taking the reins?
 To become a detached and unhindered true human being (*zhēnrén*),
 flying on a crane (*chéng hè*).

Lǐ Dàochún, *Zhōnghé jí*, DZ249, JY226

See also: **hè** (8.1), **qíhè**.

cuti-citta (Pa) *Lit.* departing (*cuti*) consciousness (*citta*); passing away awareness; passing-away thought; according to the *Abhidhamma* (analytical) tradition of *Theravāda* Buddhism, the final thought or consciousness of the present life and one of the fourteen functions or aspects of consciousness (*viññāṇa-kicca*). See **death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism, javana** (8.1).

death (Gk. *thanatos*) The permanent end of all life functions in an organism; mystically, the departure of the soul and mind from the body.

At the time of death, all the energy that supports living processes is withdrawn and physical life ceases. As an experience, few people know what this entails, for nobody returns. Consequently, fear of death – of the unknown – is universal. Only advanced mystics have experiential knowledge of what death is and what happens at that time and afterwards, and they alone are genuinely unafraid of it. In fact, quite apart from dreading death, they see it as a release from the bondage of the body and the spiritually suffocating atmosphere of the physical universe. When the time comes for an advanced mystic to die, he simply leaves his body behind, going into the higher worlds in full consciousness. The process is entirely under his control, and he has absolutely no fear. As Plotinus is reported to have said as he lay dying: “Now I will try to make what is divine in me ascend back to what is divine in the universe.”¹

This enlightened attitude towards death is brought out very clearly in mystic literature. In the *Acts of Thomas*, when Judas Thomas is about to meet his end, he speaks (as did Jesus)² of death as something he could avoid if he so desired, but which he is actually anticipating with pleasure. For not only will he be set free from the body, but he will also meet the radiant, spiritual form of his master, inside, and reap the harvest of his spiritual labours:

Had I willed not to die,
 you know that I am able to do so.
 But this which is called death is not death,
 but a setting free from the body;
 For which reason, I gladly receive this setting free from the body,
 that I may depart and see him that is beautiful and full of mercy –
 him that I love, him who is my beloved:
 For I have toiled much in his service,
 and have laboured for his grace that has supported me,
 and which departs not from me.

Acts of Thomas 160; cf. AAA pp.291–91, ANT p.434

The same is true of all those who have attended devotedly to meditation or interior prayer throughout their lives. In many instances, they will have come to know, inwardly, perhaps some time in advance, of their impending

departure, and they will look forward to it with anticipation. Death, says Teresa of Ávila, is really an easy matter. It will be like the flights and raptures of the soul that she has previously experienced:

Death seems to me to be the easiest thing for one who serves God. For in a moment, the soul finds itself freed from this prison and at rest. I think those raptures in which God carries away the spirit, and shows it such excellent things, are like the departure of the soul from the body. For in a single instant, the soul finds itself in possession of all these good things. Let us omit any word about the pains suffered when soul and body are torn from each other, for little importance should be paid to them. The death of those who truly love God and have put aside the things of this world must come very gently.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 38:5; cf. CWT1 pp.331–32, CWT1 p.269

While it is clear that no one can escape death, mystics still claim to have ‘conquered’ death. As Jesus says at the beginning of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

Whoever uncovers the meaning of these sayings will never taste death.

Gospel of Thomas 32:1; cf. GS p.380, NHS20 pp.52–53, NSJ p.11

He means that those who practise the mystic path discover and experience the essential immortality of the soul, and understand that though the body may die, the soul does not. When they die, if not before, they leave the body in full consciousness. Perhaps, too he means that the soul will not have to return to another birth in this world of death.

The prerequisite for such salvation is to be the disciple of a saviour, a “living one” who is an incarnation of the divine Word:

He who gains life from the living one shall not see death.

Gospel of Thomas 51:111; cf. GS p.399, NHS20 pp.92–93

Such a saviour puts the soul into contact with the “Five Trees”, the eternal aspects of the Word within:

For there are Five Trees for you in paradise,
which remain undisturbed summer and winter,
and whose leaves do not fall.

Whoever knows them will not experience death.

Gospel of Thomas 36:19; cf. GS p.383, NHS20 pp.60–61

One of the best-known discussions concerning death from a mystical perspective is found in Plato’s *Phaedo*, which relates the conversation of Socratēs

with his friends in his prison cell, immediately prior to his execution. In this dialogue, Phaedo describes the death of Socratēs to his friend, Echecratēs, who had not been present at the time:

In the first place, my own feelings at the time were quite extraordinary. It never occurred to me to feel sorry for him, as you might have expected me to feel at the death bed of a very dear friend. The master seemed quite happy, Echecratēs, both in his manner and in what he said; he met his death (*thanatos*) so fearlessly and nobly. I could not help feeling that even on his way to the other world he had some divine protection, and that when he arrived there all would be well with him. So I felt no sorrow at all, as you might have expected on so solemn an occasion.

Plato, Phaedo 58e–59a; cf. CDP p.42

Preparation for death, says Socratēs, is the lifelong aim of a philosopher (*philosophos*, lover of wisdom). To Socratēs, a true philosopher was a seeker of spiritual wisdom, sometimes even a spiritual guide or master. What are today known as philosophers were then more akin to professional sophists (*sophistēs*), who were interested in mastering the arts of rhetoric, argument and persuasion, and in teaching these skills (and other subjects such as virtue and music) to others:

I want to explain to you how it seems to me natural that a man who has really devoted his life to philosophy should be cheerful in the face of death (*apothaneisthai*), and confident of finding the greatest blessing in the next world when his life is finished. . . . Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for death (*apothnēskēin*) and dying. If this is true, and they have been actually looking forward to death all their lives, it would of course be absurd to be troubled when the event comes for which they have been preparing and desiring so long.

Plato, Phaedo 63e–64a; cf. CDP p.46

He begins by defining the nature of death:

Is death (*thanatos*) simply the release of the soul from the body? Is death (*to tethnanai*) nothing more nor less than this, the separate condition of the body by itself when it is released from the soul, and the separate condition by itself of the soul when released from the body? Is death (*thanatos*) anything else than this?

Plato, Phaedo 64c; cf. CDP p.47

During life, the aim should be to remain as unaffected as possible by the body, so as to be ready for death whenever the time should come:

It seems that as long as we are alive, we shall continue closest to knowledge if we avoid as much as we can all contact and association with the body, except when it is absolutely necessary; and instead of allowing ourselves to become infected with its nature, to purify ourselves from it until God Himself gives us deliverance.

Plato, Phaedo 67a; cf. CDP p.49

In fact, this is the primary goal of a true philosopher:

If the philosopher's occupation consists precisely in the freeing and separation of soul (*psychē*) from body, ... then it is a fact that true philosophers make dying their profession, and that to them of all men death (*to tethnanai*) is least alarming....

And if, at its release, the soul (*psychē*) is pure and carries with it no contamination of the body, because it has never willingly associated with it in life, but has shunned it and has habitually kept itself separate – in other words, if it has pursued philosophy in the right way and really practised how to face death (*apothnēskein*) easily – ... then it will depart to that place which is, like itself, invisible, divine, immortal, and wise; where, on its arrival, happiness awaits it, and release from uncertainty and folly, from fears and uncontrolled desires and all other human evils; and where, as they say of the initiates in the mysteries, it really spends the rest of time with God.

Plato, Phaedo 67d–e, 80e–81a; cf. CDP pp.50, 64

As Phaedo relates, Socratēs, amidst the distress of his friends, then puts his own words into practice, and drinks the cup of poisonous hemlock, which was the means of his execution:

“But at least one may pray to the gods that my removal from this world to the next will be a happy one; that is my own prayer; so may it be.” With these words he pressed the cup to his lips and drank it off with good humour and without the least distaste. Up until this time most of us had been fairly successful in keeping back our tears; but when we saw that he was drinking, that he had actually drunk it, we could do so no longer. In spite of myself the tears came pouring out, so that I covered my face and wept broken – not for him, but for my own calamity in losing such a friend. Critōn had given up even before me, and had gone out when he could not restrain his tears. But Apollōdorus, who had never stopped crying even before, now broke out into such a

storm of passionate weeping that he made everyone in the room break down, except Socratēs himself, who said:

“Really, my friends, what a way to behave! Why, that was my main reason for sending away the women, to prevent this sort of disturbance (he had sent his wife Xanthippē out at the beginning of the dialogue); because I am told that one should make one’s end in a calm frame of mind. Calm yourselves and try to be brave.”

This made us feel ashamed, and we controlled our tears. Socratēs walked about, and presently, saying that his legs were heavy, lay down on his back – that was what the man recommended. The man (he was the same one who had administered the poison) kept his hand upon Socratēs, and after a while examined his feet and legs; then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. Socratēs said, “No.” Then he did the same to his legs; and moving gradually upwards in this way, he let us see that he was getting cold and numb. Presently, he felt him again and said that when it reached the heart, Socratēs would be gone.

The coldness was spreading about as far as his waist when Socratēs uncovered his face – for he had covered it up and said (they were his last words): “Critōn, we owe a cock to Asclepius. See to it and don’t forget.”

“No, it shall be done,” said Critōn. “Are you sure there is nothing else?”

Socratēs made no reply to this question, but after a little while he stirred; and when the man uncovered him, his eyes were fixed. When Critōn saw this, he closed the mouth and eyes.

Such, Echecratēs, was the end of our companion, who was, we may fairly say, of all those whom we knew in our time, the bravest and also the wisest and most upright man.

Plato, Phaedo 117c–118a; cf. CDP pp.97–98

See also: **death** (6.2), **dying while living**.

1. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 2; cf. *PPH* p.45.
2. Cf. *John* 18:36; *Matthew* 26:53.

death (Native North American) According to the belief, the spirits of the dead dwell in the land of the dead, referred to in the numerous myths and legends of the different nations. The legends of some traditions give an elaborate account of the after-death worlds and the spirit officials who receive the dead and oversee their existence. Many stories concern descent to the land of the dead, sometimes of the living in search of the dead. Various ceremonies are also performed in honour of the dead, both at the time and at some definite

period afterwards, such as one year. In the Lakota tradition, the spirit that leaves the body at death is known as a *nagi*. During life it is called a *woniya*; after death it becomes a *wanagi*.

There are many variations among the stories concerning the nature of death. The Zuni tribe of Native American Pueblo people, living in what is now New Mexico, believe that a person's spirit (*pinanne*) remains in the land of the living until four days after death. Therefore, on the morning of the fifth day, the deceased person's door is left open so that the spirit can escape. During those four days, the spirit may make its presence known by making noises that are otherwise inexplicable. A *pinanne* is also able to communicate with the living through dreams.

Having pointed out that with several hundred different Native American traditions it is very difficult to make generalizations, a modern internet writer 'Ojibwa' neatly summarizes something of Native American beliefs concerning death:

Among many of the Indian nations in Massachusetts there was the idea that after death, the soul would go on a journey to the southwest. Eventually, the soul would arrive at a village where it would be welcomed by the ancestors. In a similar fashion, the Narragansett in Rhode Island viewed death as a transition between two worlds: at the time of death, the soul would leave the body and join the souls of relatives and friends in the world of the dead, which lay somewhere to the southwest.

Among some of the tribes, such as the Beothuk (of Newfoundland) and the Narragansett (of Rhode Island), it was felt that communication between the living and the dead was possible. Among the Narragansett, the souls of the dead were able to pass back and forth between the world of the dead and that of the living. The dead could carry messages and warnings to the living. Among the Caddo on the Southern Plains, the living could send messages to their deceased relatives by passing their hands over the body of someone recently deceased, from feet to head, and then over their own body. In this way messages could be sent via the deceased to other dead relatives.

One common theme found in many of the Indian cultures in North America is the idea of reincarnation. The idea that life and death are part of an ongoing cycle is found among many tribes. Sioux writer Charles Eastman reports: "Many of the Indians believed that one may be born more than once, and there were some who claimed to have full knowledge of a former incarnation."¹

In the Northwest Coast area, Gitksan writer Shirley Muldon reports: "We believe in reincarnation of people and animals. We believe that the dead can visit this world and that the living can enter the past.

We believe that memory survives from generation to generation. Our elders remember the past because they have lived it.”²

Among the Lenni Lenape (of the Northeastern Woodlands), female elders would carefully examine babies, looking for signs of who the child had been in an earlier life. These signs included keeping the body relaxed and the hands unclenched and reacting favourably to places and things associated with the dead relative. Writing in 1817 about one Lenni Lenape man, Christian missionary John Heckewelder reported: “He asserted very strange things, of his own supernatural knowledge, which he had obtained not only at the time of his initiation, but at other times, even before he was born. He said he knew that he had lived through two generations; that he had died twice and was born a third time, to live out the then present race, after which he was to die and never more to come to this country again.”³

Reincarnation was often viewed as something that happened not just to humans, but to animals as well. Thus, a hunter would thank the animal that had just been harvested so that the soul of the animal would be reborn as an animal with good feelings toward the hunter and would therefore allow its physical form to be harvested again.

In many Indian cultures throughout North America, the names of the deceased were not, and in many cases are not, spoken. The deceased may be spoken about, but in an indirect way that does not use their name. Among the Navajo, the name of the deceased was traditionally not mentioned for one year following death. After this year, the name of the deceased was rarely mentioned.

The possibility of naming a place after a dead person was unthinkable and would have negative consequences for the soul of the deceased.

Ojibwa, “Traditional Native Concepts of Death,” TCDO

Looking at the matter from a more academic perspective, the contemporary author Sam Gill writes:

In her beautifully poignant short story, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds,” the Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Silko describes the events at the end of the old man Teofilo’s life. When his children find him dead at a sheep camp, they paint his face and tie a small feather in his hair. There was a smile on his son’s face as he strewed corn meal and pollen in the wind, and bade his father to send rain clouds. In even this minor aspect of the funeral rite of passage, the Pueblo belief in the interdependence of the living and the dead is revealed. If one lives a proper life into old age, he will become a cloud or *kachina* spirit in death. These spiritual entities, then, are identified with the life-giving substance rain. For many cultures in North America, the journey along life’s road does not end in death, but continues beyond

this life and world. In some cultures such as the Pueblo, that afterlife may remain in intimate interrelationship with the world of the living. Hence there is an affinity between the dead and the spiritual world. In other cultures, it is quite the opposite; the dead are identified with potentially malevolent ghosts and witches.

Quite commonly in North America, the language of human destiny, the goal of life, is phrased as living a life of good health leading to a death in old age. Hence death in old age is often not an imbalance in cosmic forces or the final failure of efforts to ward off ill health but a passage that had been prepared for throughout the journey along life's road. With death in advanced age as life's goal, however, a premature death can be understood as a matter for serious concern – since it speaks not only of the plight and destiny of the deceased but of the status of the world in which the person has lived and died. This view is in direct continuity with the view of health, for untimely death is the ultimate condition of illness. It may be considered a time of grave danger, of high suspicion aimed even at members of the family and community, and of self-contemplation by the living about the conditions that led to this death.

Funeral rites are rites of passage, for they resolve the state of impropriety that arises at death: the presence of a dead person in the domain of the living. The rite resolves this condition by inducting the deceased into the domain of the dead. This is a particularly important religious occasion; for whatever the status of the dead, a funeral rite of passage necessarily involves the contact of the two cosmic spheres symbolically associated with the living and the dead. The occasion of death, therefore, affords a religious community the opportunity to address such things as eschatology (*i.e.* final and ultimate things) and destiny. Because of this religious aspect of funeral and mortuary customs, we may learn something of the religious beliefs of prehistoric peoples from burials. This aspect is not, of course, peculiar to Native America but is a central factor in the general study of religion in prehistoric times.

Death is a major subject in Native American oral traditions. Stories that deal with various aspects of death include the origin of death, visits by mortals to the land of the dead, and the journey by a husband to the land of the dead in search of his dead wife. This latter story of particular interest because of its widespread incidence in North America and its identification with the classical Greek story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Many examples could be presented to demonstrate the importance of death in the religious life of Native American peoples, but we must at this point be satisfied with calling attention to the extent and complexity of the religious aspects of death. For life's road to be

meaningful, it must lead somewhere – it must have a destination. Death is therefore either the event of life's ultimate fulfilment or ultimate failure. Few moments in the life of the individual can rival the moment of death for bearing religious significance.

Sam Gill, Native American Religions, NARG pp.109–11

A story told by the Pawnee concerns a man's grief over the loss of his young wife. Taking the help of the wind, he travels to the land of the dead to find her:

At the start of his journey, the husband meets an old woman who lives in a *tipi* covered with sage, fox skins, and eagle feathers. She gives him four mud balls to use to attract his wife's attention in the land of the dead. He throws the mud balls at his wife to remind her that people still live. When she recognizes him, she follows him home.

On their return journey the couple meet the same old woman. She tells them to keep the mud balls, and if they grow hungry on the journey home to throw one of the balls and it will become a buffalo. She teaches the man the whistle dance (also known as the elk dance because the whistle given to the man for use in the dance is made from an elk bone) to remind people of their future life in the land of the dead. She gives him red beans to take back to his people, saying that eating the beans will give people power to communicate with the dead. She also gives him a rattle and tells him that warriors who die on the plains make their home in it. She instructs him to have his wife sleep each night on a bed of cactus so her nerves will become normal again. The two arrive home, but stay by themselves for several days because they carry the odour of the dead.

Later, the man goes on the warpath, carrying the rattle the old woman gave him. When the enemy comes near, he removes the handle of the rattle. Dust flies out and becomes armed warriors, who attack the enemy and capture many ponies. When the man holds up the rattle, the warriors become dust again and return to it. The man becomes a famous warrior, but he always travels alone. Many women want to marry him, and eventually he takes a second wife. His first wife tells him he must always remember her and be kind to her. One day while visiting his second wife, the man speaks unkindly about his first wife. When he returns home, he finds her bones lying on the bed. He places the bones in a grave and mourns, but no spirit addresses him. He performs the whistle dance, but cannot communicate with his wife. He has lost her forever.

"Whistle Dance," Dictionary of Native American Mythology, DNAM

1. Charles Eastman, *The Soul of the Indian*, SICE p.167.
2. Although widely quoted on the internet, the original source has remained elusive.

3. John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations*, HMC I p.247.

death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism Buddhism gives no credence to an entity known in other traditions as an eternal ‘self’ or ‘soul’ (S. *ātman*, Pa. *atta*); rather, it teaches the notion of no-soul (S. *anātman*, Pa. *anattā*). Without the convenience of the concept of an eternal soul, Buddhism has formulated various descriptions of the process of death and rebirth in order to address the question of what actually dies and is reborn. However, the reality that underlies the question of whether or not there is such a thing as an individual and eternal soul and what is reborn is something beyond the capacity of words to convey; from a logical perspective neither the ‘individual eternal soul’ nor the ‘no-soul’ concepts are intellectually satisfying or conclusive.

In Buddhist understanding, what constitutes an individual ‘person’ is an array of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that constantly interact with the body in a dynamic, ever-changing manner. This combination of bodily and mental facets and faculties, known as the five *skandhas* (S. aggregates, combinations, the five constituent elements of being), is what is understood to constitute the individual self. At death, the essence of this collection of mental energies, influenced entirely by the *karma* of the individual, is reborn as a new, constantly changing ‘individual’.

The Buddha’s understanding lies between two extremes. According to the doctrine of *uchchheda-dṛiṣṭi* (S. doctrine of annihilation) there is a self, but it is annihilated at death. On the other hand, *śāśhvata-dṛiṣṭi* (S. doctrine of eternalism) maintains that there is an eternal self or soul that transmigrates from one body to another. According to various texts, the Buddha observed that such extreme viewpoints misrepresent the reality, which is somewhere in between.¹ Although some aspects of the individual do continue from one life to the next, there is no individual self that exists independently of the five *skandhas*, and there is no separate and distinct, eternal soul.

It is within the context of this philosophy of no-self that the *Theravāda Abhidhamma* (analytical) literature speaks of death and rebirth.² According to the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, as death approaches, one of three things presents itself to the mind of the dying person:

1. The strong memory of a past *kamma* (action, S. *karma*).
2. A *kamma nimitta* – a sign or symbol (*nimitta*) of a past *kamma*, such as some aspect of the *kamma* that made a deep impression. A butcher, for instance, may see a knife or hear an animal squealing in fear or pain; or a pilgrim may see a shrine; or a devotee may see the object of his or her worship.

3. A *gati nimitta* – a premonitory indication or symbol of the next birth that is determined by the force of the past *kamma*. A person destined for hell, for instance, may see flames; one who is going to be reborn in a heavenly region may see beautiful flowers or celestial mansions; one who is about to be reborn as a human being or animal may see the red colour of the womb.

These three constitute what is called near-death or death-proximate *kamma* (*maraṇāsanna-kamma*):

The mode, circumstances and nature of the next birth are conditioned by what is known as the death-proximate *kamma* (*maraṇāsanna-kamma*), which is the volition, wholesome or unwholesome, that is present immediately before death. With this is associated the *paṭisandhi-viññāna* or connecting consciousness between one manifestation and another. At the moment just preceding death, the death-proximate *kamma* may take the form of a reflex of some good or bad deed performed during the dying person's life. This sometimes presents itself to the consciousness as a symbol, like the dream symbols of Freudian psychology. It may bring with it an indication of the future existence, a glimpse of the realm (*loka*) in which rebirth is about to take place. It is due to the arising of some unwholesome consciousness from past *kamma* that the dying sometimes exhibit fear, while others, experiencing wholesome death-proximate *kamma*, die with a smile on their lips, seeing themselves welcomed by celestial beings or their friends who have passed away before them. Everyone who has been present at death beds can recall examples of both kinds.

When none of these *kamma* manifestations is present, however, as with those who die in a state of complete unconsciousness, the next birth is determined by what is called reserved *kamma* (*kaṭattā-kamma*). This is the automatic result of whatever *kamma* of the past is strongest, be it good or bad, and has not yet borne fruit or exhausted its force. This may be weighty or habitual *kamma*.

Francis Story, Kamma and Causality, KCFS p.12

According to the analytical *Abhidhamma* texts, in relation to rebirth, heavy (*garuka*) *kamma* and habitual (*āciṇṇa* or *bahula*) *kamma* of a wholesome or unwholesome nature are said to dominate lighter *kamma* and come to fruition in the next birth. The near-death (*maraṇāsanna*) *kamma* thus consists of either the result of some previous *kamma*, wholesome or unwholesome, or it may be a symbol (*nimitta*) or indication of it (*kamma nimitta*), or it may be a symbol of one's future birth (*gati nimitta*). If none of these three present themselves, then rebirth is determined by the reserve (*kaṭattā*) *kamma*.

The Malaysian *Theravāda* Buddhist nun Sayalay Susīlā (b.1963) provides examples of the nature of the *kamma nimitta* and *gati nimitta*:

Sign of *kamma* (*kamma nimitta*): wholesome signs of *kamma* may show a pagoda, oil lamps, fruits or flowers one had offered or any instrument one had used when performing wholesome *kamma*. Unwholesome signs of *kamma* may include a knife, gun, axe, bomb, poison or any instrument one had used, when performing unwholesome *kamma*. These can be sight, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, or a mental object. Those who performed meritorious deeds such as building hospitals, monasteries or roads, during the dying moment will see the hospital and monasteries as *kamma nimitta*. On the other hand, those who had slaughtered animals might hear the screaming of the victim or see the knife used when slaughtering the animals.

Sign of destination (*gati nimitta*): the sign that appears at the near-death moment that shows where one may be reborn. If you are going to be reborn in hell, you may see black dogs chasing you, hell wardens pulling you, or fire and may feel hot. If you are going to be born as a human being, you may see the red colour in the mother's womb. If you are going to be reborn as an animal, like a monkey, you may see a forest. Some may see brightness, celestial mansions or deities or hear celestial music if they are going to be reborn in heaven.

Sayalay Susīlā, Unravelling the Mysteries of Mind & Body, UMMB p.91

According to the *Abhidhamma* model of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the thought process (*citta-vīthi*, *viññāṇa-kicca*) generated by this near-death *kamma* runs its natural course through a sequence of 'thought moments (*cittakkhaṇa*)'. These take place within the fundamental *bhavanga-sota* (life stream), which is the continuity factor or 'consciousness continuum' by which the individual maintains a sense of his continuous existence and retains impressions or memories of experience. It is essentially the tablet of the mind upon which are written the other thought moments with which life is filled. This near-death thought process is described as five weak *javanas* (swift running) thought moments. During life, the *javanas* constitute the mental functions that react and respond to events and experiences.

The culminating thought moment is the *cuti-citta* (departing thought moment), which is the final thought moment (cognizance or awareness) of the present life. The Sri Lankan monk Nārada Mahāthera (1898–1983) observes that it is the reactions and responses during life, *i.e.* whatever is experienced during the *javana* aspect of mental function, that create impressions on the mind and determine the next life:

There is a misconception amongst some that the subsequent birth is conditioned by this last death consciousness (*cuti-citta*), which in itself has no special function to perform. What actually conditions rebirth is that which is experienced during the *javana* process.

Nārada Mahāthera, The Buddha and His Teachings, BTNT p.351

Following the *cuti-citta*, the individual consciousness ceases, although some bodily processes may continue for a short while. Nārada Mahāthera depicts the nature of rebirth of the “new consciousness”:

The passing away of the consciousness of the past birth is the occasion for the arising of the new consciousness in the subsequent birth. However, nothing unchangeable or permanent is transmitted from the past to the present.

Just as the wheel rests on the ground only at one point, so, strictly speaking, we live only for one thought moment. We are always in the present, and that present is ever slipping into the irrevocable past. Each momentary consciousness of this ever-changing life process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions on it, to its successor. Every fresh consciousness, therefore, consists of the potentialities of its predecessors together with something more.

At death, the consciousness perishes, as in truth it perishes every moment, only to give birth to another in a rebirth. This renewed consciousness inherits all past experiences. As all impressions are indelibly recorded in the ever-changing palimpsest-like mind, and all potentialities are transmitted from life to life, irrespective of temporary disintegration, thus there may be reminiscence of past births or past incidents. Whereas if memory depended solely on brain cells, such reminiscence would be impossible.

This new being which is the present manifestation of the stream of *kamma* energy is not the same as, and has no identity with, the previous one in its line – the aggregates that make up its composition being different from, having no identity with, those that make up the being of its predecessor. And yet it is not an entirely different being since it has the same stream of *kamma* energy, though modified perchance just by having shown itself in that manifestation, which is now making its presence known in the sense-perceptible world as the new being.³

Nārada Mahāthera, The Buddha and His Teachings, BTNT pp.351–52

“Death,” therefore, “is not the complete annihilation of a being” for the actuating force that gives life and consciousness “is not destroyed” – it arises from the “same stream of *kamma* energy”. At the end of one lifetime and the beginning of the next, the consciousness of the former is linked to the latter

as it passes from *cuti-citta* (departing thought moment) to *paṭisandhi-citta* (rebirth-linking thought moment). One life ends with the passing of the *cuti-citta* and the next life starts at the moment the new *paṭisandhi-citta* arises. The only exception is the death of an *arahanta* (noble one, enlightened one), whose *cuti-citta* is not followed by a *paṭisandhi-citta*.

According to *Theravāda*, there is no interval or intermediate state (S. *antarābhava*, T. *bardo*) between death and rebirth, as described by Tibetan Buddhism and some *Mahāyāna* schools:

Death, according to (*Theravāda*) Buddhism, is the cessation of the psychophysical life of any one individual existence. It is the passing away of vitality (*āyu*), i.e. psychic and physical life (*jīvitindriya*), heat (*usmā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Death is not the complete annihilation of a being, for though a particular lifespan ends, the force which hitherto actuated it is not destroyed.

Just as an electric light is the outward visible manifestation of invisible electric energy, so we are the outward manifestations of invisible kammic energy. The bulb may break, and the light may be extinguished, but the current remains and the light may be reproduced in another bulb. In the same way, the kammic force remains undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body, and the passing away of the present consciousness leads to the arising of a fresh one in another birth. But nothing unchangeable or permanent ‘passes’ from the present to the future.

In the foregoing case (of a dying person whose last thoughts reflects some good *kamma*), the thought experienced before death being a moral one, the resultant rebirth consciousness takes for its material an appropriate sperm and ovum cell of human parents. The rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) then lapses into the *bhavanga* (life continuum, life stream) state. The continuity of the flux, at death, is unbroken in point of time, and there is no breach in the stream of consciousness.

Rebirth takes place immediately, irrespective of the place of birth, just as an electromagnetic wave, projected into space, is immediately reproduced in a receiving radio set. Rebirth of the mental flux is also instantaneous and leaves no room whatever for any intermediate state (S. *antarābhava*, T. *bardo*). Pure (i.e. *Theravāda*) Buddhism does not support the belief that a spirit of the deceased person takes lodgement in some temporary state until it finds a suitable place for its ‘reincarnation’.

Nārada Mahāthera, The Buddha and His Teachings, BTNT pp.352–54

Nārada Mahāthera ends his description of death and rebirth by pointing out that whatever may be the state of being of a dying person, there will always be

a suitable place for rebirth. There are many worlds or planes of consciousness, and Buddhism believes in rebirth in heavenly or hellish realms, according to the individual's state of mind, just as there are innumerable other planets in the material cosmos:

The question might arise: are the sperm and ovum cells always ready, waiting to take up the rebirth thought? According to Buddhism, living beings are infinite in number, and so are world systems. Nor is the impregnated ovum the only route to rebirth. Earth, an almost insignificant speck in the universe, is not the only habitable plane, and humans are not the only living beings. As such it is not impossible to believe that there will always be an appropriate place to receive the last thought vibrations. A point is always ready to receive the falling stone.

Nārada Mahāthera, The Buddha and His Teachings, BTNT p.355

There may also be a question concerning the physical distance between the location of death and subsequent rebirth. The answer is that as far as the mind is concerned, distance is irrelevant, just as one can move instantly in thought between far-distant places. The query is put by the seeker King Milinda to the Buddhist scholar Nāgasena:

King Milinda: "Venerable Nāgasena, if somebody dies here and is reborn in the world of *Brahmā* (*brahmaloka*), and another dies here and is reborn in Kashmir, which of them would arrive first?"

Nāgasena: "They would arrive at the same time, O King."

King Milinda: "Give an illustration, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "In which town were you born, O King?"

King Milinda: "In a village called Kalasi, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "How far is Kalasi from here, O King?"

King Milinda: "About two hundred miles, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "And how far is Kashmir from here, O King?"

King Milinda: "About twelve miles, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "Now think of the village of Kalasi, O King."

King Milinda: "I have done so, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "And now think of Kashmir, O King."

King Milinda: "It is done, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "Which of these two, O King, did you think the more slowly and which the more quickly?"

King Milinda: "Both equally quickly, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "Just so, O King, he who dies here and is reborn in the world of *Brahmā* (*brahmaloka*) is not reborn later than he who dies here and is reborn in Kashmir."

King Milinda: "Give me one more simile, Venerable Sir."

Nāgasena: "What do you think, O King? Suppose two birds were

flying in the air and they should settle at the same time, one upon a high and the other upon a low tree, which bird's shade would first fall upon the earth, and which bird's later?"

King Milinda: "Both shadows would appear at the same time, not one of them earlier and the other later."

Questions of King Milinda 7:5, *PTSQ* pp.82–82; cf. in *BTNT* pp.354–55

See also: **bardo**, **bhavanga** (8.1), **citta** (8.1), **viññāṇa** (►1).

1. *E.g. Saṃyutta Nikāya* 12:15, *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.17; *Mahāvastu* 3:448, *MHVA*, *MVJ3* p.449.
2. *E.g. Anuruddha, Abhidhammattha Sangaha* 5:1–16, *ASAM* pp.265–316.
3. Bhikkhu Silacāra.

death in life See **dying while living**.

die to live See **dying while living**.

dying in love Interruption of normal consciousness due to intense absorption in the object of love; mystically, ecstasy; complete death of the self in the love of God; also, withdrawal of consciousness from the body through the love of God, and passing through the experience of death; an expression commonly linked by Christian writers with some lines from the biblical *Song of Songs*:

If you should find my beloved,
what must you tell him? –
That I am sick with love.

Song of Songs 5:8, *JB*

Speaking of himself, Richard Rolle writes:

It is "no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him",¹ and as a result he is overwhelmed by love and longing for him. He almost dies because of its sweetness; he can scarcely live because of love.

His is the soul that says,
"Tell my beloved I am sick with love;"
I desire to die;
I long to pass away;
I am burning to pass over.
See, I am dying through love!

Come down, Lord.
 Come, my beloved, and ease my longing.
 See how I love, I sing, I glow, I burn.
 Have mercy upon this poor wretch:
 bid me to be brought before you. . . .

There is no one more blessed than he who dies because he loves so much. Truly, no creature can love God too much. In all other things, what is practised in excess turns to vice, but the virtue of love is such that the more it grows, the more marvellous it becomes. Truly, a lover will languish if he does not have the object of his love near him. That is why the scripture says, "Tell my beloved that I am sick with love," as if it were saying, "Because I cannot see him whom I love, my very body is wasting away with the intensity of my love!"

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 11, 17; cf. FLML (1:11, 17) pp.54–55, 78 FLRR pp.78–79, 99

The burning intensity of such love may be difficult to understand by those who are not blessed by it:

Sweet love, you are so clearly the dearest of all that is sweet! You catch and take hold of our minds by your love; so completely do you possess them; so quickly do you make them despise transient things and vain pleasures; so marvellously do you cause them to yearn for the things you desire. You came into me, and all my inward soul has been filled with the sweetness of heavenly joy, and made abundant with the fervour of spiritual happiness. No wonder, then, that I long for love, the fairest of flowers, and inwardly burn with fiery flame. If only I could be quit of this place of exile!

The heat is such that no one can imagine it unless he has experienced its comfort for himself. His heart is bursting with song, a captive in the care of love. For of all the things I experience here, this is the most delightful, and I nearly die when it builds up in me by fervent love. Now my beloved, grant that I may cease to live; for death, dreaded by so many, shall be to me as heavenly music. And though I am now physically sitting in solitary state, I seem to be seated in paradise, and there sweetly resounds in me a song of love for the joys my beloved has given to me!

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 16; cf. FLML (1:16) pp.75–76, FLRR p.78

The inner being burns in the sweet fire of divine devotion:

If there is anyone anywhere who has at some time burned with this faithful love of the Word of God; if there is anyone who has received

the sweet wound of him who is the “chosen dart”; . . . if there is anyone who has been pierced with the lovable spear of his knowledge, so that he yearns and longs for him by day and night, can speak of nought but him, would hear of nought but him, can think of nothing else, and is disposed to no desire nor longing nor yet hope, except for him alone – if such there be, that soul then says in truth: “I have been wounded by love.” And she has received her wound from him of whom Isaiah says: “And he has made me as a chosen dart, and in his quiver has he hidden me.”²

Origen, On the Song of Songs 3:8; cf. OSS p.198

Other lines from the *Song* are commonly quoted in the same context:

For love is strong as death. . . .
The flash of it is a flash of fire,
a flame of *Yahweh* Himself.
Love no flood can quench,
no torrents drown.

Song of Songs 8:6–7, JB

François de Sales explains the verse:

“Not death itself is so strong as love.” Death separates the soul of a dying person from the body, from all worldly things. Love also separates from the body, and from all worldly things, the soul of the individual who possesses it. The only difference is that death always does this in actuality, while love usually does it only by desire. Usually, I say, because love is sometimes so intense as even to bring about the actual separation of soul from body; for lovers, this is a blessed death, better than a hundred lives.

François de Sales, Love of God 7:9; cf. LGFS p.295

He goes on to say that people may die in different ways, some suddenly and unexpectedly. And it is not the thought at the moment of death that counts, so much as the underlying trend and habit of a person’s mind:

Just as it is in the nature of the damned to die in sin, so it is in the nature of God’s chosen ones to die in His love, His grace. . . . Even though they were not thinking of God at the moment of death, still they died loving him. Men of learning do not lose their knowledge during sleep, otherwise they would be ignorant when they woke up, and have to go back to school. It is just the same with all the habits of prudence, temperance, faith, hope, love: they are part of a good man’s make-up, even though he is not always practising them. If a man is

sleeping, his habits appear to sleep too, awakening when he does; if, therefore, a good man dies suddenly, crushed by falling masonry, struck by lightning, suffocated by bronchial catarrh, or in the delirium of a raging fever – he is clearly not in the act of loving God at that moment, but he still retains the habit of it. The wise man had this in mind, when he said: “Not so the innocent; though he should die before his time, rest shall be his.”³ All that is necessary to win eternal life is to die in the state, the habit of love.

François de Sales, Love of God 7:9; cf. LGFS pp.295–96

See also: **die to live, I die daily.**

1. *Galatians* 2:20.
2. *Isaiah* 49:2.
3. *Wisdom of Solomon* 4.7.

dying to live (in Judaism) Dying to material and sensory existence; coming alive to God and to awareness of the divine presence.

The spiritual ideal that suffuses all Jewish belief and practice is embodied in the biblical passage, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”¹ Many of the rabbis over the centuries have asked why the word ‘all’ is repeated three times in one sentence. According to the *Midrash* (commentary), the repetition implies wholehearted and complete devotion.² In other words, one cannot worship with a divided mind. Having accepted this, the rabbis then explored how a person can be truly wholehearted. They cite a *Mishnah* (interpretation) which says that it is necessary to love God even if He takes your soul³ – meaning even if you have to die for Him. This led some of the mystically inclined rabbis to teach that in order to worship God truly, to become attached to God, the pull of the body and senses must be rejected.

The rabbis were trying to address the experience of a lifelong conflict between body and soul, in which the body is viewed as the prison of the soul. In this respect, the rabbis were applying to Jewish religious thought the Greek understanding of salvation as the freedom of the soul from the prison of the body. This ideal was eloquently expressed by the poet-mystic Judah Halevi (1085–1141), who begs for God’s grace to overcome the pull of his body:

O Lord, before Thee is my whole desire –
 yea, though I cannot bring it to my lips.
 Thy favour I would ask a moment and then die –
 Ah, would that mine entreaty might be granted!

That I might render up
 the remnant of my spirit to Thine hand,
 Then should I sleep,
 and sweet my sleep would be.
 When far from Thee,
 I die while yet in life;
 But if I cling to Thee I live,
 though I should die.

Judah Halevi, Dīwān 43, DHJL, SPJH p.87

Halevi is expressing his yearning for God, to be embraced by divine grace. God is the essence of life, and to be far from Him is spiritual death, to be near Him is true life. Material existence is a veil that hides the soul from the Divine, but by the death of material desires and entanglements, the soul discovers its essential closeness to God.

Expression of the soul's yearning to experience its innate immortality and nearness to God is found far earlier in the works of the first-century Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. Philo was deeply influenced by the hybrid culture of Jewish Hellenism that arose following the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE, when the influence of Greek philosophy spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Philo writes that two biblical personalities, Nadab and Abihu,

die in order that they may live, receiving an immortal life in exchange for mortal existence, and departing from the created to the Uncreated. And over them a proclamation is uttered betokening immortality: "Then they died before the Lord;"⁴ that is to say, they lived; for it is not lawful for any dead person to come into the presence of the Lord. And again, this is what the Lord Himself has said, "I will be sanctified in those who draw nigh to Me."⁵

Philo Judaeus, On Flight and Finding 11; cf. PCW5 pp.40–43, WPJ2 p.206

The influence of Greek philosophy is again evident in an early Jewish Neoplatonist work, *The Book of Definitions* by Isaac Israeli of North Africa (c.855–955). Israeli begins by referring to Plato, going on to present his understanding of Plato's observation:

Plato said that philosophy is a zeal, a striving, and concern for death. Says Isaac: this is a description of great profundity and elevated meaning. For in saying "concern for death", the sage meant it to be understood in the sense of the killing of beastly desires and lusts, for in their mortification and avoidance is the highest rank, the supernal

splendour, and the entry into the realm of Truth. And by vivifying beastly desires and lusts and by strengthening them, spiritual men are drawn away from that which is due to God in the way of obedience, purity, and attention to prayer at the prescribed hours.

Isaac Israeli, Book of Definitions 65–73, IINP p.26

A story that makes the same point appears in the Babylonian *Talmud*. Alexander the Great questions a group of Jewish sages, asking them:

“What should a man do in order that he might live?”

And they reportedly answered, “He should mortify (*yamit*, kill) himself.”

Whereupon Alexander asked, “What should a man do in order to die?”

To which question the Jewish sages replied, “He should vivify himself;” that is, he should indulge in bodily desires.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Tamid 32a, in KGSD pp.21–22

To ‘kill oneself’ means to eliminate all lower desires and passions, including the sense of an individual self. Then one will find true spiritual life within. On the other hand, indulgence in material life and bodily pleasures kills the true spiritual life within. Then one is dead to the spirit and alive to the world and to the body.

Another story recounted in the *Talmud* may also contain a concealed reference to the need to ‘die’ in order to find eternal spiritual life. Four rabbis enter the *pardes* (orchard), a metaphor for the inner journey, and ascend on the *merkavah* (chariot) through several supernal realms.⁶ Of one of the rabbis, Ben Azzai, it is said, “Ben Azzai gazed and died.” The *Talmud* then cites a passage from the *Psalms*, interpreting the true meaning of his death: “Of him scripture says: ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.’”⁷ This could, of course, mean that the spiritual illumination was too powerful and his body could not bear it, and so he died. Yet he had ascended spiritually, so it is unlikely that his ascent had caused the death of his body. And in the tradition, he was still regarded as a *ḥasid*, a saint. It is more likely, therefore, that the statement refers to Ben Azzai’s transcendence of the physical body, transported by his spiritual vision and illumination.

Rabbi Yonah of Gerona (*d.* 1263), sometimes called Jonah Gerondi, also refers to the *Talmud* when he quotes the passage, “Die, so that you do not die”:

How hard is death to one who does not divorce the lust of the world from his soul until death does so. Our sages of blessed memory have said in tractate *Derekh Erez* (of the *Talmud*): “Is it your desire not to die? Die, so that you do not die.” That is, one who wishes his day of death to lead to eternal life will resolve within himself that since he

is destined to leave the earth and his bodily desires and, in the end, to despise and abjure them, he will abandon them in his lifetime and make use of the earth only in the service of the exalted God. Then, his day of death will lead to life without end.

Rabbi Yonah of Gerona, Sha'arei Teshuvah, STYG pp.101–3

Control of physical appetites as a prerequisite for spiritual attainment is also emphasized in the work of Shem Tov ibn Falaquera (1225–1295) of Spain, who was familiar with the works of both Greek and Muslim philosophers:

“If you kill (*tamit*) your body in seeking the Truth, you will vivify your soul.” . . . “The meaning of the appetitive (soul; *i.e.* the soul governed by base desires) is that one should abandon bodily pleasures, except for what is necessary”.

Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, Book of the Seeker, BSSF pp.61–62, in KGSD p.27

In the same vein, Rabbi Hayyim ibn Attar (1696–1743), a greatly revered Talmudist and kabbalist who lived in Morocco and Jerusalem, comments on a verse from the *Song of Songs*: “My soul failed me when he spoke.”⁸ He explains that for the mystic, “the soul departs from the body without the departure being felt, so great is the delight that is experienced.”⁹ Ibn Attar also comments on the biblical verse “And these words; which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart,”¹⁰ saying that the love of God cannot be generated simply by trying to induce it, but by obedience to the divine precepts and the requirements of spiritual life:

The verse wishes to teach the children of Israel the method by which to attain to the love of God. For love is not an act where a man can force his heart to do the will of the King, but is a matter of the heart. For as long as his heart lacks any sense of that which produces yearning, a man has no love, even if he tries to coerce the heart with every kind of coercion. Consequently, this counsel is given by God, who gives counsel: “These words shall be upon your heart.” That is to say, if he constantly takes the words to heart there will be born in the heart powerful longing and desire for spirituality, and the heart will race to love God in all that He commands.

And we, too, orphans of orphans though we are, sense it. For greater is the desire of our heart and longing for the Creator more than all the riches of the world and regal honours. And every pleasant thing is sensed as loathsome and despicable in comparison with the smallest portion of that which we comprehend through the sensation of having the words in our heart. Happy are we. How goodly is our portion. I have referred to this idea in many places.

Hayyim ibn Attar, Or ha-Hayyim, OHHA p.385; cf. in HLLJ p.75

Ibn Attar goes on to declare that true knowledge or comprehension of God can only come about when both body and mind are left behind – including the ability to comprehend intellectually – since God is beyond all intellectual and sensory qualities. He is truly “life above life” – a soul above the human soul. Attar explains this by means of a riddle and, one imagines, with some degree of humorous intent:

I shall explain to whoever reflects on the innermost comprehension of that which is comprehended (*haskalat ha-muskal*) that the comprehension of that which is comprehended does involve comprehension, but when it is comprehended the one who comprehends that the object of his comprehension cannot be comprehended.

When he comprehends of his own accord, and yet it is not of himself, he then comprehends that that which is comprehended is so comprehended from a Source that cannot be comprehended by the intelligence and it is conveyed to those who comprehend by their becoming united with this comprehension, in accord with the mystery of a soul added to a soul.

At this stage, all human comprehension becomes superfluous, like the king’s crown and throne in relation to the king himself. The one who has reached this stage will sense that there is a life above life, concerning which Moses said “choose life”,¹¹ the ultimate destiny, not that which is generally understood as such. And he will bless the living God who has given this treasure to His chosen people.

Ḥayyim ibn Attar, Or ha-Ḥayyim, OHHA p.90, in HLLJ p.74

Thus the physical appetites and the mind’s intellectual activity must be left behind, and the lower aspects of one’s humanity must ‘die’ if one is truly to ‘live’ in the spirit.

See also: **dying while living, kisses** (8.1), **neshikah** (8.1).

1. *Deuteronomy* 6:5.
2. *Mishnah Sifre on Deuteronomy* 32, in *SDLF* pp.54–55.
3. *Mishnah Sifre on Deuteronomy* 32, in *SDLF* pp.54–55.
4. *Leviticus* 10:2.
5. *Leviticus* 10:3.
6. *Babylonian Talmud, Mishnah Ḥagigah* 14b, in *SBJT* pp.30–31.
7. *Psalms* 116:15.
8. *Song of Songs* 5:6.
9. Ḥayyim Attar, *Or ha-Ḥayyim, OHHA* p.385, in *HLLJ* p.75.
10. *Deuteronomy* 6:6.
11. *Deuteronomy* 30:19.

dying while living Passing through the experience of death in full consciousness, while still living in the physical body; withdrawal of the soul from the body, and ascent to the inner realms, while still living. Many mystics have used expressions which indicate that a person should learn to go through the process of death before being required to leave the body by the termination of physical life. That is, a seeker should practise the withdrawal of consciousness from the body, and – concentrating it at the single eye – should learn to leave the body and return to it at will during meditation. Plutarch (c.46–120 CE) writes:

At the moment of death the soul experiences the same impressions, and passes through the same process as those who are initiated into the great mysteries. . . . At first there is wandering, and wearisome roaming, and fearful travelling in darkness with no end to be found; then, just before the consummation, terrors of all kinds, panic, and shivering, and perspiration, and a feeling of awe.

And then suddenly a marvellous light (*phōs*) appears, and open places and meadows await, and a land of purity with sounds and dances and sacred things to greet the eye and ear. And there he walks around at will, now perfect and initiated (*memuemenos*) and free, crowned with a wreath, celebrating with the holy. And he looks down on the great mass of those living on earth – uninitiated, unpurified, packed together in mud and murk, trampling one another under foot, yet out of fear of death clinging to their evils because they do not believe in the blessings beyond.

Plutarch, Fragment in Stobaeus, Anthology 4:52.49; cf. AMCB p.91, AMSS p.9

Looked at outwardly, the process of death varies from individual to individual, according to their medical condition and their state of consciousness. Medically, death of the body can also be difficult to diagnose. From a spiritual perspective, death refers simply to the permanent exit of the soul from the body, though outwardly it may be difficult to determine when this has taken place. Some mystics have said that the soul's withdrawal from the body at the time of death mirrors that of its withdrawal at the time of meditation.¹ First, the attention withdraws from the extremities, and dying people will sometimes say that their feet and legs have become cold or numb. Attention then withdraws further, sometimes, in the case of a dying person, with a gurgle or 'death rattle' as the soul current leaves the chest and throat; then the soul and mind exit through the single eye. When the soul departs, the result is death of the physical body. Interestingly, a description of this process is encountered in an obscure, apocryphal Coptic text, a fictional account of the death of Joseph ostensibly narrated by Jesus himself:

And I put my hand in under his heart, and I found his soul brought to his throat, for it was about to be brought up from his body.

Death of Joseph 19, CAG p.139

The same process of withdrawal takes place when the soul leaves the body in meditation, the difference being that life functions continue normally. After the period of meditation is over, the soul returns to the body and the person continues with daily life. The 'point' or 'door' through which the soul leaves and re-enters the body is the single eye.

Generally speaking, scholars have not understood expressions such as 'dying while living'. In the *Apocryphon of James*, for instance, a passage that has been taken by scholars as an exhortation to physical martyrdom is probably nothing of the sort. Jesus advises his followers to "become seekers of death", adding that the people of this world are the "dead who seek for life":

Become seekers of death, like the dead who seek for life; for that which they seek is revealed to them. And what (then) is there to trouble them? . . . Verily I say unto you, none of those who fear death will be saved; for the kingdom of God belongs to those who put themselves to death. Become better than I; make yourselves like the son of the Holy Spirit! . . . It is the Spirit that raises the soul, but the body that kills it.

Apocryphon of James 6, 12; cf. NHS22 pp.36–37, 46–47

The writer says that the people of the world, "those who fear death", will never be saved. Only those who "put themselves to death", who learn after great effort in spiritual practice to withdraw the mind and soul from the body and pass into the higher worlds, will be able to find the "kingdom of God". Only in this way can they become a "son of the Holy Spirit".

This is what a Manichaean psalmist had in mind when writing:

He that dies lives,
he that labours (in meditation) has his rest.

Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.159

Labouring in spiritual practice by learning to die while still living in the body gives a person the true rest or peace of the Spirit.

The same point is made in an allegorical tale encountered in the *Acts of John* where a young man has been turned back from a degenerate way of life by the intervention of the apostle John, and by a vision in which he was told, "Die to live." The youth then says to the apostle:

I would become one of them that hope on Christ, that the voice may prove true which said to me, "Die to live." And that voice has also

fulfilled its effect, for he is dead – that faithless, disorderly, godless one that I was – and I have been raised by you, as a believer, faithful and godly, and would know the Truth, which I beg you to reveal to me.

Acts of John 76; cf. ANT p.247, ANTE p.332

Here, dying while living also means dying to the old self and being raised up, through the process of meditation, with the help of a mystic. Angelus Silesius, and other Christians, have used similar expressions:

Go out and God comes in; die, and you live in God;
Be not, it will be He; be still, God's plan is wrought.

Angelus Silesius, Cherubic Wanderer 2:136, CW p.63

The process of consciously dying while living was also known to Socratēs, Plato, and other Greek mystics. In a well-known passage from *Phaedo*, Plato relates a dialogue that took place in prison while Socratēs was awaiting his execution. Socratēs is explaining that since the aim of a true “philosopher” (lover of Wisdom) during his life is to learn how to separate the soul from the body, there is no reason why he should feel afraid of death:

Socratēs: And what is purification but separation of the soul (*psychē*) from the body, . . . and accustoming itself to gather itself together from every part of the body (*sōma*), and to concentrate itself until it is completely one-pointed. And to be, both now and in the future, a soul (*psychē*) released from the chains of the body (*sōma*)?

Simmiās: Very true.

Socratēs: And this separation and release of the soul (*psychē*) from the body (*sōma*) is termed death (*thanatos*)?

Simmiās: To be sure.

Socratēs: And the true philosophers, and only they, eagerly practise the release of the soul (*psychē*). Is not the separation and release of the soul (*psychē*) from the body their particular practice?

Simmiās: That is true.

Socratēs: And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death (*to tethnanai*), and yet complaining when it comes upon them.

Simmiās: Clearly.

Socratēs: And the true philosophers, Simmiās, are always occupied in the practice of dying, wherefore also to them least of all is death (*to tethnanai*) terrible.

Plato, Phaedo 67c–e; cf. CDP p.50, DP1 p.418

Dying while living is again described in Hermetic writings. Like the dialogues of Plato and others, the style of this literature is often that of a conversation between the master and his disciples. This excerpt, interesting though it is, also exemplifies the confusion caused by translation and changing terminologies. The creative power or divine Intelligence in creation is the divine Mind or *Nous*. Consequently, the divine spark in man is called the “mind (*nous*)”, while the intermediary between the divine spark and the body is called the “soul (*psychē*)”, and the life force that keeps the body alive is the “vital spirit (*pneuma*)”. In modern terminology, ‘mind’ and ‘soul’ would normally be reversed, while in other contexts, *pneuma* (*lit.* breath, wind) is understood to mean ‘spirit’ – in a specifically spiritual context. The “body of fire” could perhaps refer to the astral body or body of light, or maybe it is only a general way of describing the natural light of the soul:

HERMÈS: The same thing happens when a person leaves the body (*sōma*). When the soul (*psychē*) rises up within itself, the soul (is separated from the vital spirit, subtle body energy), and the mind (*nous*) is separated from the soul (*psychē*). Then the mind (*nous*), which is divine by nature, stripped of its garments, takes on a fiery body, and travels throughout the (heavenly) regions, leaving the soul (*psychē*) to its judgment and to whatever chastisement it deserves.

TAT: Father, what do you mean when you say that the mind (*nous*) is separated from the soul (*psychē*) and soul (*psychē*) from the vital spirit (*pneuma*) – and that the soul (*psychē*) is the garment of the mind (*nous*), and the vital spirit (*pneuma*) is the garment of the soul (*psychē*)?

HERMÈS: The hearer, my son, should be of one mind (*synnoein*) and one spirit with the speaker; indeed, he should have a hearing subtler than the voice of the speaker.

It is in a body (*sōma*) made of earth, my son, that this arrangement of garments has come about. For it is not possible for the mind (*nous*) to reside by its own self in nakedness in a body (*sōma*) made of earth; and it is not possible, on the one hand, that the earthly body (*sōma*) should contain such immortality nor, on the other, that so great a power should endure contact with a body (*sōma*) that is defiled by passion. The mind (*nous*) therefore takes the soul (*psychē*) for its envelope, so to speak. And the soul (*psychē*) itself, being in some measure divine, uses the vital spirit (*pneuma*) as its envelope, and it is the vital spirit (*pneuma*) that pervades a living creature.

Then, when the mind (*nous*) frees itself from the earthly body (*sōma*) it is immediately clothed in own true robe of fire, with which it could not dwell in an earthly body (*sōma*). For earth cannot

tolerate fire; it is set all ablaze even by a tiny spark; this is why the earth is encompassed by water, as a wall and a defence, to protect it from the blazing of the fire.

But mind (*nous*), which is the subtlest of all spiritual things, has for its body (*sōma*) – fire, the subtlest of all the material elements. For mind (*nous*), which is the maker of all things, uses fire as its instrument of construction. The mind (*nous*) of all is the maker of all things; but the mind (*nous*) in human beings is the maker only of earthly things. Stripped of its garment of fire, the mind (*nous*) in human beings cannot make things divine, for it is human in its habitation.

The soul (*psychē*) in man, however – not every soul (*psychē*), that is, but one that is pious – is daimonic and divine. And such a soul (*psychē*) when freed from the body, if it has fought the fight of piety – and the fight of piety is to know God and to do no harm to any man – becomes entirely mind (*nous*).

Hermetica 10:16–19; cf. *HAG* pp.81–82, *HGCH* pp.33–34, *TGH2* pp.151–53

And again, reverting to the more common use of ‘soul’ in a mystical context:

For never, my son, can an embodied soul (*psychē*) that has once leaped aloft, so as to get a hold upon the truly Good and Real, slip back again into what is evil and unreal. For when the soul (*psychē*) once knows the Author of its peace, it is filled with a marvellous love, and with forgetfulness of every ill, and can no longer remain absent from the Good. This, my son, this is the consummation of piety; and when you have attained it, you will live your life aright, and be blessed in your death. For your soul (*psychē*) will not fail to know whither it must wing its upward flight.

Hermetic Fragment, in *Stobaeus, Physica* 35:1,
Fragment IIB (Festugière); cf. *HAG* p.153, *TGH3* pp.4–5

Experiences of coming and going from the body before death are not uncommon, as in the many near-death and out-of-the-body experiences that have been documented in recent decades.² Human beings are spiritual beings, all of the same spiritual essence, and the experience of leaving the body during meditation or mystic transport is universal to all cultures. Thus, Wovoka the Wood Cutter, a native American Paiute prophet from Pyramid Lake, Nevada, writes of an experience during an eclipse of the sun, during which he lost consciousness of this world:

When the sun died, I went to heaven and saw God and all the people who had died a long time ago. God told me to come back and tell

the people they must be good and love one another, and not fight, or steal, or lie.

Wovoka the Wood Cutter, in CFD p.8

Likewise, Leonard Crow Dog (b.c. 1942), a twentieth-century Sioux, writes:

When you fall down in a trance, then for a while you'll die. You will get into the power. You'll have a good vision. When you come to life again, you'll act as a messenger – relate what you've seen, be a messenger from the ghosts.

Leonard Crow Dog, in CFD p.16

The ability to withdraw from the body at will is described only infrequently, since it requires great purity of mind. Moreover, those who can do so will normally say little or nothing about it.

See also: **awakening** (8.1), **dying in love**, **I die daily**, **near-death experience**, **out-of-the-body experience** (8.1).

1. E.g. Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Perspectives* 327, 330, SP2 pp.246, 248–50; Maharaj Charan Singh, *Spiritual Discourses*, SD2 p.284.
2. See **near-death experience**, **out-of-the-body experience** (8.1).

gati nimitta (Pa) *Lit.* destiny (*gati*) sign (*nimitta*); according to the *Abhidhamma* (analytical) tradition of *Theravāda* Buddhism, a sign or image relating to a person's future birth or destiny that comes into the mind of a dying person; a part of the *Abhidhamma*'s description of death and rebirth. See **death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism**.

I die daily A statement made by the apostle Paul in his first letter to the *Corinthians*,¹ according to the translation of the King James Version, which is followed by many others.² This puzzling assertion appears in a passage in which Paul is arguing the case for the resurrection of the dead, citing, as his irrefutable example, Jesus who died and rose again, and whose death has saved all who believe in him. Paul, familiar with the concept of resurrection from his upbringing as a Pharisee, seems to have been responsible for introducing the belief into Christianity at an early stage in its development as a religion. His belief was that the body in which the dead will rise will be a “changed” and spiritual form – but still a physical body.³

It has been suggested⁴ that “I die daily” refers to the mystic practice of dying while living. However, while the spiritual meaning of resurrection – as

described in certain gnostic texts⁵ – is to learn how to go through the experience of death while still living, it does not seem that Paul is speaking of this practice. Paul’s comment, “I die daily,” is undoubtedly obscure and interpretations vary, but it needs to be understood in the context of his other observations concerning death and resurrection. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explains the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection, according to his somewhat complex way of thinking:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized in Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We are therefore buried with him by baptism into death: so that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so should we also walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old man (old self) was crucified with him, so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and that henceforth we should no longer be enslaved by sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise should you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ.⁶

Romans 6:3–11; cf. KJV, RSV

Paul, who had persecuted the Christians and then been converted, had turned away from his previous life of sin; and thus saw himself sharing in the death of Jesus in the hope and expectation of sharing in his eternal life as well.

For this he was willing to endure all hardships,⁷ which has led some scholars to interpret “I die daily” as a reference both to this willingness to die and to facing the hardships themselves. Hence the translation of the passage in some Bible versions as, “I face death every day.”⁸ The translation in the *Jerusalem Bible* provides some clarity. In this letter, Paul is speaking of the practice, prevalent in his day, of being baptized on behalf of someone who had died:

If this (resurrection) were not true, what do people hope to gain by being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not ever going to be raised, why be baptized on their behalf? What about ourselves? Why are we living under a constant threat? I face death every day, brothers, and I can swear it by the pride that I take in you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If my motives were only human ones, what good would it do me (for example) to fight the wild animals at Ephesus?

1 Corinthians 15:29–32, JB

Paul drew his resolve not just from his faith in Jesus, but from his own Jewish heritage. Quoting the *Psalms*, he writes:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”⁹

Romans 8:35–36; cf. KJV

There is, however, a deeper level in which Paul dies daily, which is more significant than the persecution of a hostile world. To the *Galatians* he writes:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20, KJV

Paul’s life – his very being – has become fused with and animated by that of Jesus. To the *Corinthians*, he writes:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:8–11, KJV

Paul sees his condition as one in which his old self has died in Jesus, but his new self is still lodged within its old bodily prison awaiting the moment of its resurrection.¹⁰ Jesus died only once, but Paul continues to die in Christ every day so that his new spiritual self may grow and flourish. As he writes to the Romans:

I urge you therefore, my brothers, in consideration of God’s mercy, that for worship which is holy and acceptable to God, you offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by your new mind that you may discover what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1–2; cf. JB, KJV, RSV

And to the Corinthians:

We should not lose heart; for although this outer man of ours (the body) is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16; cf. JB, KJV, RSV

Paul dies daily, and yet his inner man is renewed day by day. In other words, Paul suffers every day by bearing the death of Jesus as a constant example and inspiration; he therefore dies daily in imitation of Christ.

Later Christian writers have generally understood “I die daily” to mean either the facing of hardship and persecution on a daily basis, for the sake of Jesus or – taking the sentence out of its original context – dying to the self in the love of God or Jesus. Exemplifying the latter interpretation, Ramón Lull provides a well-known definition of love:

“What do you mean by love?” said the beloved. And the lover answered: “It is to bear upon the heart of the lover the features and words of the beloved. It is the yearning that is in the heart of the lover with desire and tears. It is the mingling of boldness and fear that comes through great fervour. It is the desire for the beloved as the end of the will. It is that which makes the lover like to die when he hears one sing of the beauties of his beloved. It is that wherein ‘I die daily,’ and wherein forever is my will.”

Ramón Lull, *Lover and the Beloved* 170–71; cf. BLB p.49

See also: **dying in love, dying while living, resurrection** (8.4).

1. 1 Corinthians 15:31, KJV.
2. E.g. American Standard Version, Douay-Rheims Bible, English Revised Version, English Standard Version, New American Standard Bible; cf. Darby Bible Translation, Wycliffe Bible, Young’s Literal Translation.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:51.
4. E.g. Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live*, DTL pp.25, 135.
5. *Gospel of Philip* 56, 66, 73, NHS20 pp.152–53, 172–73, 188–89; *On the Soul* 134, NHS21 pp.158–61; *On the Resurrection* 45, 48, NHS22 pp.150–51, 154–55; *Testimony of Truth* 34–35, 36–37, 40, NHS15 pp.134–39, 144–4.
6. See also Romans 5:8–19.
7. 1 Corinthians 4:9–13; 2 Corinthians 6:4–9, 11:23–27, 12:10.
8. See also International Standard Version, New International Version; cf. New Living Translation.
9. Psalms 44:22; cf. KJV.
10. See 1 Corinthians 15:35–55.

intiqāl (A/P) *Lit.* movement, locomotion, transferral, transit, passage; transfer from one place to another; hence, death; generally used for the soul’s withdrawal

from the world of the senses and its departure from the body at the time of death; discarding the physical frame and ascent into the heavenly regions; the passage from one mystical station (*maqām*) to another; also, transmigration of the soul; rebirth; the passage of the soul from one body to another.

Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the passage (*intiḳāl*) from one station to another:

Passing from station to station does not mean that you abandon a station. On the contrary, you acquire that which is higher than it without departing from the station within which you dwell. It is a passage (*intiḳāl*) to the second station, but not *from* the first; or rather, it is a passing *with* the latter. Such is the passage (*intiḳāl*) of the folk of *Allāh*. And such also is passage (*intiḳāl*) within one knowledge to another knowledge. This does not imply that he becomes ignorant of the first knowledge. On the contrary, it never leaves him.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 3:225.20, FMIA5 (4:351) p.334, SPK p.280

See also: **tanāsukh** (6.3).

iwi (Hw) *Lit.* human bones; regarded as possessing significant energy or power (*mana*), because bones survive after the flesh has decayed, and are the lasting material part of a deceased person.

When human beings die, the greater part of their *mana* goes with them, but some *mana* remains in their clothes, bones, hair, nails, or excretions.¹ For this reason, the bones of a deceased *aliʿi* (royal person) were usually hidden in a lava cave to prevent unscrupulous *kāhuna* (shamans) from using the residual *mana* in the bones to cause trouble. Even commoners hid the *iwi* of their deceased family members to prevent *kāhuna* from casting spells on the survivors. To this day, the bones of Kamehameha the Great (1758–1819), the ruler who united all the islands under one government, remain undiscovered:

The bones of the dead, considered the most cherished possession, were hidden, and hence there are many figurative expressions with *iwi* meaning life, old age: *Na wai e hoʻōla i nā iwi?* – who will save the bones? (Who will care for one in old age and in death?); *maʻaneʻi au me ʻoe a waiho nā iwi* – here I am with you until leaving the bones (death); *ʻO ʻoe nō kuʻu iwi, a me kuʻu ʻiʻo* – thou art my bone and my flesh; *holehole iwi* – to strip bones of flesh, to speak ill of one’s kin; *pili i nā iwi* – to wager one’s bones (one’s life).

“Iwi,” Hawaiian Dictionary, HDPE p.104

Surviving as an idiom, *holehole iwi* (to strip the bones of flesh) was once an actual practice. In preparation for bleaching and preserving the bones of the dead, the flesh was literally cut from the bones.

See also: **mana (Hawaiian)** (7.3).

1. See *Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKKI* p.151.

'ja' lus (T) *Lit.* rainbow body; rendered phonetically as *jalu*; also called 'od jus (body of light).

The manifestation of a 'ja' lus is a goal (before or at the time of death) of *thod rgal* – a meditation practice particularly associated with the *Dzogchen* school of Buddhism and the Tibetan *Bön* tradition. The 'ja' lus is a *sambhoga-kāya* (body of bliss, subtle body) that can manifest in various ways. It is so-called because its attainment is accompanied by lights and rainbows seen by others.

If culmination of the *thod rgal* practice is not completed until death, then the body of the dying practitioner is said to shrink over a period of seven days until it finally disappears – only the hair, fingernails and toenails being left behind (because it is understood that they are not pervaded by the consciousness of the individual). This transformation is accompanied by the emanation of rainbow lights from the diminishing body.

When the 'ja' lus has been attained during life, the practitioner arises in a *sambhoga-kāya* that has the ability to go anywhere desired. A master who realizes the 'ja' lus while still alive is said to have realized the rainbow body of the great transformation ('*pho ba chen po'i 'ja' lus*). Many realized *Dzogchen* masters are said to have left this world, having attained the 'ja' lus, leaving only their hair and nails behind them.

Some have differentiated between the 'ja' lus and the *sambhoga-kāya*, saying that unlike the 'ja' lus, the *sambhoga-kāya* is not visible to ordinary human or physical eyes. A master can therefore manifest himself to human beings in his 'ja' lus – in a *nirmāṇa-kāya* (emanation body, human body) – while his *sambhoga-kāya* is visible only to those who can see him on higher planes.¹

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the foremost teacher of the *Bönpo Dzogchen* tradition in modern times, explains that the *sambhoga-kāya* is not something created by the meditator, but is present in the “natural state” of pristine awareness:

All of the visions that the practitioner experiences, whether pure or impure, come to dissolve into the natural state. This includes our physical body, which itself is the result of past karmic causes and represents our impure karmic vision. For the practitioner, everything dissolves. This sets the stage for the spontaneous manifestation of the *sambhoga-kāya*, which has been present in potential in the natural state from the very beginning. Since it is already there, no primary cause for its manifestation is needed. The secondary causes for its manifestation, however, are the purifications of obscurations along the path. This is

like wind removing clouds from the sky, so that the face of the sun becomes visible, or like opening the doors to the temple, so that the image of the Buddha can clearly be seen.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.45

Lopon Tenzin maintains that realization of the rainbow body is the result of the practice of *thod rgal*, rather than other tantric practices. *Thod rgal* is a method of meditation designed to bring about the manifestation of various visions in a consciousness that has been brought to a state of stable awareness of its own being through the practice of *khregs gcod*. At the culmination of the practice of *thod rgal*, everything returns to the “natural state”. Even the physical body itself is said to dissolve into the clear light of primordial consciousness and gnosis (T. *ye shes*):

To realize the rainbow body means that we have practised *thod rgal* and not some other method. The visions that arise are not specifically created, but appear spontaneously in the presence of secondary causes such as sunlight, total darkness, and the clear open sky. They arise spontaneously from the natural state; no *bskyed rim* (generation stage, S. *utpatti-krama*) or *rdzogs rim* (completion stage, S. *sampanna-krama*) practices must be accomplished first as preparation. All that is required is the capacity to remain with stability in the natural state. This is called stable *khregs gcod*. Then the *thod rgal* visions come automatically, whether in sunlight or total darkness or in the empty sky. Gradually all the pure visions of the deities arise, and these visions develop by way of four stages (*snang ba bzhi*) until completion. Then they all dissolve into the natural state. Our personal reality of pure and impure vision (*snang ba*) dissolves into Reality, which is the natural state.

At the same time that our visions dissolve, our physical body also dissolves because it is just one manifestation of our impure karmic vision, the product of our past karmic heritage. Our normal everyday impure vision has the same source as the *thod rgal* pure vision, and now both equally dissolve into their source, the natural state. There is a single primordial base, the natural state, but there are two paths, impure karmic vision and pure vision, and two fruits or results, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Having returned to the ultimate source, then the potentiality of the natural state manifests as a rainbow body.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN pp.46–47

In this rainbow body or *sambhoga-kāya*, the advanced practitioner can manifest to both human and celestial beings:

Thereafter, this 'ja' lus, or rainbow body, can appear in a (seemingly) material sense to sentient beings in order to teach them. The rainbow body is not something material as such, but appears to be so since it can act on all of the senses of a sentient being simultaneously. The *sambhoga-kāya* can be perceived only by the *āryas* (noble ones), the *bodhisattvas* who have ascended the third, fourth, or fifth paths (higher levels of spiritual attainment). They can hear the actual teachings of the *sambhoga-kāya*, whereas ordinary beings cannot see or hear this manifestation. Thus, it is the *nirmāṇa-kāya* (human body) that ordinary beings can hear and perceive. To human beings, this *nirmāṇa-kāya* appears as human. In other worlds and with other species of beings, the situation will be different. But the rainbow body, as the potentiality of the natural state, is not limited to any particular form. It can appear in a myriad different forms. Since the natural state has been with us from the very beginning, we have done nothing more than rediscover it, continue in it, and allow its potentiality to manifest. That is buddhahood.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.47

According to the *Dzogchen* tradition:

All the original masters of the *Dzogchen* tradition in India, at the end of their earthly teaching careers, manifested this body of light ('*od lus*). These masters – Garab Dorje, Mañjushrīmitra, Shrīśiṃha, and Jñānasūtra – after dissolving their gross physical body into pure radiant energy (a process known as *ru log*, or 'reversal', where the physical elements of the material body are dissolved into the corresponding coloured lights), then subsequently reappeared in the dimension of the sky (heavenly realms) as bodies of light in order to bestow their last testaments (*zhal 'chems*) upon their respective senior disciples. Such a last testament gave in succinct verses the very heart-essence of the master's teaching, which had now been realized in his own personal experience. This was an *upadesha* (initiation, instruction), not a scholastic exposition. Upon hearing these precepts, the disciple instantly attained a vast and profound understanding equal to that of the master. These last testaments were known as the posthumous teachings of the *vidyādhara*s (*rig 'dzin gyi 'das rjes*). In the case of Garab Dorje, this last testament, his posthumous teaching ('*das rjes*), is known as *The Three Statements that Strike the Essential Points* (*Tshig gsum gnad du brdeg pa*). In *Dzogchen*, the essential point (*gnad*) is the state of contemplation, that is, the state of immediate intrinsic awareness.

John Reynolds, Golden Letters, GLTS pp.34–35

It may be wondered how this transformation takes place. According to *Dzogchen* teachings, a master who has fully realized that the world is a dream, having no genuine substance, sees its apparent phenomena as part of ultimate Reality, as part of the Truth or Reality body of the Buddha (S. *dharmakāya*, T. *chos sku*). He perceives space and all that resides in it as luminous and transparent, since his consciousness, which is one with the Ultimate, permeates all of space. He even perceives his physical body as a body of light. When he dies, he may leave instructions for his physical body to remain undisturbed for some days. While he remains absorbed in the clear light of Reality, lights and rainbows are said to emanate from his body, and when they have ceased all that remains is his clothes, hair, and the nails of his hands and feet.² In a process of transubstantiation, the five elements (*tattvas*, *bhūtas*) of the physical body are said to have been transmuted into their subtle forms, into the light essence of which they are made, and which manifests as light of many colours. The manifestation of the 'ja' lus at the time of death is sometimes associated with the seemingly miraculous disappearance of the practitioner while meditating.

Sogyal Rinpoche relates the story of a twentieth-century practitioner who attained the rainbow body:³

Usually a person who knows he or she is about to attain the rainbow body will ask to be left alone and undisturbed in a room or a tent for seven days. On the eighth day, only the hair and nails, the impurities of the body, are found.

This may be very difficult for us now to believe, but the factual history of the *Dzogchen* lineage is full of examples of individuals who attained the rainbow body, and as Dudjom Rinpoche often used to point out, this is not just ancient history. Of the many examples, I would like to choose one of the most recent, one with which I have a personal connection. In 1952 there was a famous instance of the rainbow body in the east of Tibet, witnessed by many people. The man who attained it, Sönam Namgyal, was the father of my tutor and the brother of Lama Tseten. . . .

He was a very simple, humble person who made his way as an itinerant stone carver, carving *mantras* and sacred texts. Some say he had been a hunter in his youth, and had received teaching from a great master. No one really knew he was a practitioner; he was truly what is called 'a hidden yogin'.

Some time before his death, he would be seen going up into the mountains and just sit, silhouetted against the skyline, gazing up into space. He composed his own songs and chants and sang them instead of the traditional ones. No one had any idea what he was doing. He then fell ill, or seemed to, but he became, strangely, increasingly happy. When the illness got worse, his family called in masters and doctors.

His son told him he should remember all the teachings he had heard, and he smiled and said, “I’ve forgotten them all and anyway, there’s nothing to remember. Everything is illusion, but I am confident that all is well.”

Just before his death at seventy-nine, he said: “All I ask is that when I die, don’t move my body for a week.” When he died his family wrapped his body and invited *lamas* and monks to come and practise for him. They placed the body in a small room in the house, and they could not help noticing that although he had been a tall person, they had no trouble getting it in, as if he were becoming smaller. At the same time, an extraordinary display of rainbow-coloured light was seen all around the house. When they looked into the room on the sixth day, they saw that the body was getting smaller and smaller. On the eighth day after his death, the morning for which the funeral had been arranged, the undertakers arrived to collect his body. When they undid its coverings, they found nothing inside but his nails and hair. My master Jamyang Khyentse asked for these to be brought to him, and verified that this was a case of the rainbow body.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.172–73

Attainment of the ‘*ja*’ *lus* has been a fundamental aspect of the *Dzogchen* tradition since its inception. Yeshe Tsogyal (757–817), a *Dzogchen* practitioner and close disciple of the Indian tantric *guru* Padmasambhava (who is credited as the founder of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan Buddhism), exhorts her readers:

If you wish to obtain a rainbow body (‘*ja*’ *lus*),
 dissolve corporeality, absorbing yourself
 in the continuous peak experience of *Dzogchen atiyoga*.
 When you arrive at the extinction of reality,
 there is nothing but the spontaneity of pure potential.

Yeshe Tsogyal, Life of Yeshe Tsogyal, SDSL pp.162–63

See also: **thod rgal** (8.5).

1. See e.g. Lopon Tenzin Namdak, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, BDTN p.47.
2. See Robert Beer, *Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, ETSM pp.31–32.
3. See also Khenpo Chöga, on *Bodhisattva-charyāvatāra* 291, DNK2 p.300; Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, *History of the Nyingma School*, NST1 p.919.

jān-afzā, jān-afzā’ī, jān-fazā, jān-fazā’ī, jān-fazāy (P) *Lit.* soul-quickenening (*jān-afzā’ī* etc.), spirit-enlivening, heart-ravishing; the process by which the

soul realizes its own eternal existence or subsistence (*baqā'*) in God, through annihilation (*fanā*) of all traces of illusory, individual existence:¹

Soul-quickening (*jān-fazāy*) is said to symbolize the attribute of subsistence (*baqā*), which is obtained by the wayfarer through the subsistence of the Beauty of God, once all traces of human nature have been eradicated from him. Through this attribute, he becomes post-eternally subsistent and everlastingly existent. This condition is no longer subject to annihilation. . . . As illustrated by Shabistārī:

Beneath the veil of every atom
is the soul-quickening (*jān-fazāy*) beauty
of the Beloved's face.²

Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.186; cf. in SSE2 p.97

'Aṭṭār "discovered" that this subsistence arose not from his own efforts, but from the flow of divine "love":

Subsistence in God was not due to my soul, but to love:
For what I have discovered is that soul-quickening (*jān-fazā'ī*) love.

Divān-i 'Aṭṭār 447:6759, DASN p.359, in SSE2 p.97

'Irāqī pictures the divine beloved offering a "soul-quickening" drink of the "Water of Life" (the divine creative power) to souls, languishing as if dead in the "darkness" of this world:

They will pass from darkness
to the wellspring of the Water of Life (*Chashmah-i Ḥayvān*);
And at every moment with heart and soul,
they will drink from that soul-quickening (*jān-afzā*) chalice.

'Irāqī, Kullīyāt 172, KHI p.74; cf. in SSE2 p.96

1. Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4* p.634, in *SSE2* p.97.

2. Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i Rāz* 164, *GRS* p.44; cf. *GRSS* p.17.

jīte jī marnā (H), **jīvat marnā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* to die (*marnā*) while (*jī*) living (*jīte*); to die during life (*jīvat*); passing through the experience of death while still living in a human body; conscious withdrawal of the mind and soul from the body and entering the higher, heavenly worlds. Many of the various terms for death and dying in Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi stem from the Sanskrit root *mṛi* (to die).

Almost all incarnate beings fear death and try to avoid it. Human beings are afraid even of the thought of their own death. Yet death is an enigma that everyone must face, since none return from death to relate their experiences. There are a special few, however – the higher mystics – who do know what death is. They are the only ones who understand death in its entirety; and since everyone will have to die one day, they recommend that preparation be made by learning to go through the dying process in full consciousness while still living in the body:

If you die before your death (*maran*),
you will treasure such dying (*marne*).

Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 57, KBS p.113, SBSU p.309; cf. BSPS p.342

The seat of the mind and soul in the human body is at a centre in subtle matter, situated between the two eyebrows. From here, the attention spreads into the body, and – through the sense organs and the organs of action – into the world.

At death, the attention is withdrawn from the body to the eye centre. Passing through the ‘sky’ of the body (*chidākāsha*, ‘sky of consciousness’) and the mental ‘area’ associated with the functioning of the human mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*), the soul and mind together pass into the astral or subastral realms.

In many instances, the soul and mind are immediately drawn to another body. In other cases, the nature of the mind of the individual and of the actions performed in life, draw the soul either to a heavenly realm or to a hellish zone. After some time, the attraction of physical existence again exerts itself due to the weight of *karma*, and the soul takes another birth. The new form may not necessarily be human: it depends upon the burden of *karma* carried.

By practising a suitable technique, the process of leaving the body can be experienced at will. There are a number of methods by which this can be achieved. The method of the yogis, for instance, is traditionally *rāja yoga*. Indian *sants*, on the other hand, recommend a course of *sumiran* (mental repetition), *dhyān* (contemplation) and *bhajan* (devotion, listening to the inner sound), because this is a far simpler and easier way, which can be practised by anyone while living a normal human life. By *sumiran* with the attention focused at the eye centre, the attention is drawn up from the body and concentrated at the eye centre; by *dhyān* on the form of the *guru*, it is fixed there; and by means of *bhajan* or listening to the Sound Current, it ascends to higher regions. The consciousness separates from the body, and this is called dying while living.

The difference between this experience and that of death is that the connection with the body is not completely broken. The *prāṇa* (life energy) remains active in the body. This connection with the body is referred to in the Bible as the “silver cord”.¹ By this means, the body remains vitalized, life processes continue, and the soul maintains contact with the body, returning to it at will.

In this manner, the individual gains an insight into states beyond death while still living in a physical body. He loses all fear of death, for he crosses its gate daily. He travels in the astral, the causal and the higher regions, and becomes familiar with them. He is able to meet and communicate with the inhabitants of the heavenly regions. This is a matter of practice and experience, not just words or a belief based on ancient writings.

The experience is also one of great joy and happiness. No fear is involved. Moreover, those who learn the art of dying while living are well on the way to ending their captivity in the cycle of birth and rebirth. Therefore, mystics eulogize the experience of dying while living and teach the manner of doing so. Death is sweet if a person can die while living.

The higher mystics can die while living and traverse the upper realms whenever they wish. They can shift the focus of their attention at will and bring whatever they want into their consciousness. They have no difficulty doing so. But for the ordinary person, though the technique is simple, dying while living is not accomplished so easily. It involves separation of the conscious from the material, which is a spiritually evolved state of consciousness in which a person knows himself and his mind, and comprehends the mysteries of life.

This state can only be attained by controlling the mind, curbing desires and cravings, and eliminating the ego. This, however, is easily said, but is not so easy to practise. All desires for the things of the world must be dispelled. As long as bodily and worldly desires remain in the mind, the body cannot be vacated; and a person can never experience true life without passing beyond the domain of death.

Many mystics have spoken of this process, and have exhorted people to try it for themselves. The first prerequisite is to enjoy the blessings of one who knows how to die while living. Kabīr has written extensively on the subject:

Death (*maran*) is sweet for him who dies (*marai*) –
 death (*mari*) is sweet for him who has already experienced it
 through the master's grace. . . .
 O Kabīr, those who die (*mūvā*) and merge into the Lord
 become immortal (*avināśī*).

Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Padāvalī 46, KG p.80; cf. KWGN pp.292–93

In most instances, when human beings – or any other creatures – die, they are reborn, only to die once again. The best death is one that is not followed by rebirth and death:

The whole world keeps dying after death (*mar-te mar-te*),
 for no one dies the (real) death (*muā*).
 I have died a death (*muā*)
 that will make me never die again (*bahuri na marnā*). . . .

Dying (*marnā*) is better than living (*jīvan*):

if one only knew how to die (*mari*).

He who dies (*marai*) before his death (*marne*),

his soul becomes immortal (*amar*).

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Jīvat mṛitak kā ang 16, 18, KSS p.115

Kabīr also says that those who “die while living (*jīvat mirtak*)” are a rarity. “Fearless”, they merge into God, seeing Him everywhere.² To die while living is to live forever:

Die while yet alive (*jīvat marhu*), and by so dying (*marhu*),

be (truly) alive (*jīvhu*);

Thus you shall not be reborn again.

Says Kabīr, whoever is absorbed in *Nām*

remains lovingly absorbed in the *sun* (cosmic void).

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 1103–4, AGK

Such a person discovers his own innate spiritual wealth:

O Kabīr, this body is a vast ocean,

whose depth is hard to fathom;

He who dives within and dies while living (*mirtak hoi ke jo rahai*),

finds the rarest pearls.

Like a deep sea diver,

dying while living (*mar jīvā*),

I dived into the inner ocean;

And I returned bearing a handful of knowledge,

which contained a vast treasure.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Jīvat mṛitak kā ang 2–3, KSS p.114

Dādū says that for this to happen, the ego must first be eliminated. Since all creatures will eventually die, this is worth the effort:

Reduce yourself to dust (*māṭī*) while living (*jīvat*),

then the Lord will reveal Himself.

O Dādū learn to die first (*pahilī mari*),

for sooner or later it will happen to everyone.

Dādū, Bānī 1, Jīvat mṛitak ko ang 23:4, DDB1 p.191; cf. DCMU p.20

King and pauper, all will die (*marhinge*):

no one lives forever.

O Dādū, he truly lives who dies while living (*marjīvā*).

Dādū, Bānī 1, Jīvat mṛitak ko ang 23:11, DDB1 p.192; cf. in KWGN p.93

Only by this means can the soul meet the Divine:

Dādū, you will meet your Beloved
only when you die while living (*jīvat mṛitak*).
Dādū, Bānī 1, Jīvat mṛitak ko ang 23:15, DDB1 p.192

Paltū and other mystics have given the same message:

O Paltū, since death (*marnā*) is certain,
it is better to die before death (*āge mari rahau*).
Paltū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍalī 117, PSB1 p.51, SPLT p.103

All die (*mare*) without exception,
but few know how to die (*marai*).
One who dies while living (*jīytai marai*), O Paltū,
crosses the ocean of life with ease.
Paltū, Bānī 3, Sākhī 99, PSB3 p.76; cf. SPLT p.103

O Bullah, I find special comfort in departure (*hijrat*);
Daily (*nīt*) do I die (*marān*)
and daily (*nīt*) return again to life (*jīvān*):
Daily (*nīt*), I am in transit.
Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 13, KBS p.367, SBSU p.97; cf. BSPS p.469

Nānak says, to die while living:
practise such a *yoga*.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 730, AGC

To see without eyes, to hear without ears,
to walk without feet, to work without hands,
to speak without a tongue:
Like this, one remains dead while yet alive (*jīvat marṇā*).
Guru Angad, Ādi Granth 139, AGK

The easiest way to learn to die and to escape rebirth is through contact with the divine Word:

One who dies in the *Shabd* (*Sabad marai*)
is beyond death (*mar*), and shall never die (*marai*) again.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 58, AGK

See also: **marāṇa**.

1. *Ecclesiastes* 12:6.
2. Kabīr, *Ādi Granth* 1364.

kamma nimitta (Pa) *Lit.* action (*kamma*) sign (*nimitta*); according to the *Abhidhamma* (analytical) tradition of *Theravāda* Buddhism, an image of a previous action that made a deep impression at the time and that passes before the mind's eye of a dying person; a part of the *Abhidhamma*'s description of death and rebirth. See **death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism**.

Lazarus The central character in a miracle story related in John's gospel, being the friend of Jesus who was raised from the dead. The story has the attributes of a parable or allegory characteristic of this gospel. The narrative is also used to give Jesus' teachings concerning the nature of life and death. There are ample grounds for supposing, therefore, that the story is related by its unknown author as a means of conveying certain spiritual truths. The story begins:¹

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary who had anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick."

When Jesus heard it, he said, "This sickness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

John 11:1–4; cf. KJV, RSV

Taken allegorically, Lazarus represents the disciple of a master. Like all disciples, he is loved by his master. But he is sick. The "sickness" of the disciple is spiritual. It is that of sin – which brings all souls into this world. Yet, even if the disciples have become dead, spiritually, they can be raised to spiritual life by their master, because he loves them – spiritually. This kind of imagery and double meaning is common in mystic literature.

The "sickness" brings glory to the Son of God because the Son only comes to this world to forgive sins and to heal souls of their spiritual sickness. He is like a physician whose only duty is to heal sick people. The story continues:

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he heard therefore that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the same place where he was. Then, after that, he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judaea again."

His disciples said to him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone you; are you going there again?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk by day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks by night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him."

John 11:5–10; cf. KJV, RSV

Though he knows his friend is unwell, Jesus does not leave immediately for Bethany and, when he does indicate that he is ready to depart, his disciples remind him that the Jews there have recently tried to "stone" him. Jesus replies enigmatically that only those who walk by night need fear the darkness. Those who walk in the light have nothing to fear. He means that those people who are against him are in darkness, spiritually speaking. Therefore, they do not know what they are doing. He, on the other hand, walks in the light and has nothing to fear from them. His life and death are in his own hands. The story of Lazarus' sickness and death is being used to highlight the spiritual viewpoint on life and death. Spiritual light is being equated with life, and spiritual darkness with death.

These things said he, after which he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping; but I go, that I may awaken him from sleep."

Then said his disciples, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will recover." However, Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

Then said Jesus to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe; nevertheless let us go to him."

John 11:11–15; cf. KJV, RSV

Jesus now equates death with sleep, both terms – together with darkness – being commonly used in mystic symbolism for the soul's condition in this world. Again, typical of the dialogues in John's gospel, the disciples' misunderstanding permits the gospel writer to make this point through the words of Jesus. Jesus also exhibits the true mystic's foreknowledge of distant events, for no one has informed them that Lazarus has died. He further adds that the incident will help to increase their faith.

Then said Thomas, who is called Didymos, to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

John 11:16; cf. KJV, RSV

Didymos (the 'Twin') Thomas, also called Didymos Judas Thomas, later taken as the central character in the *Acts of Thomas* and the twin brother of Jesus, indicates a desire to die too. It is an incongruous comment, conveying a double meaning. On the face of it, it simply expresses the readiness to die

and escape from bodily captivity of one who understands the nature of life and death. But, spiritually speaking, the aspiration of all true disciples is to learn the art of dying while living. They seek to learn how to leave the body and to experience the process of death while still living in this world. This is what Thomas would really like to experience. The story continues:

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had already lain in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away; and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

Then said Martha to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that, even now, whatever you will ask of God, God will give it to you."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection, at the last day."

John 11:17–24; cf. KJV, RSV

This contrived conversation is again typical of John's gospel. Jesus says, "Your brother will rise again," and Martha misunderstands him to mean the traditional Pharisaic viewpoint on resurrection and the Day of Judgment. This gives Jesus the opportunity to correct her and to explain the mystic understanding of resurrection, and how it is obtained:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25–26; cf. KJV, RSV

According to the allegory, Jesus says that he himself is the "resurrection and the life": he is the means by which a soul can resurrect itself from the body and find eternal life. Throughout John's gospel, Jesus speaks as a personification of the divine Word or *Logos*. This is the design of the author who has constructed all the dialogues in this manner. The "I" who speaks as Jesus is the *Logos* as well as the *Logos* in human form – the saviour or spiritual master. Jesus then adds that there are two criteria for gaining eternal life: a person must be 'living', and he must 'believe' in the saviour and in the *Logos* – "whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." He then asks Martha if she believes this, and her reply informs the reader what 'belief' actually means in this context, and who Jesus represents in the story:

She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming to the world."

John 11:27; cf. KJV, RSV

Jesus is the Christ – the anointed one – the Son of God, the “Word . . . made flesh”,² as John begins his gospel. The story then continues with Martha going to get her sister Mary because Jesus was asking for her:

And when she had said this, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, “The master has come, and is calling for you.”
As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and went to him.

John 11:28–29; cf. KJV, RSV

When Mary and Martha arrive, the party – followed by a group of Jewish onlookers – then make their way to the cave where Lazarus has been laid, the entrance having been blocked with a large stone:

Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time he must be stinking: for he has been dead four days.”

Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that, if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that You have always heard me: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that You have sent me.”

And when he had spoken thus, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and who saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him.

John 11:39–45; cf. KJV, RSV

Throughout the dialogue, the point is made that Jesus is performing the miracle so that people should develop faith in him. He also points out that he does not need to speak out loud to communicate with God. He only does so in order that people should develop faith that he has been sent by God. Jesus – or John – is indicating that people develop faith in a master when they realize that their master has contact with God, and when they see that he is able to bring both others, and themselves, back to spiritual life from the spiritual death of materiality.

Perhaps, too, speaking “with a loud voice” symbolizes the manifestation of the Word or *Logos* as a human being. The manifestation is necessary so that souls in this world should come to know about the *Logos*, and hence of the path to God that it provides. Without the human incarnation of the Word, nobody would ever come into contact with this divine Power.

The details of the story are graphic. Lazarus is not just dead – he has started to decompose! Like John’s account of the man who had been at the pool of Siloam for thirty-eight years without being healed,³ it represents the long ages in which the soul has been in the grave of various bodies in this world. As Mary says, “Lord, by this time he must be stinking” – man ‘stinks’ with the accretions of countless sins.

The imagery of man ‘stinking’ in his sins, and of this world as a land that ‘stinks’, are not uncommon in the mystic literature of this and other periods. A Manichaean psalm, for instance (probably a translation of an early Mandaean text), describes the coming of the Son of God to this world as “an image of light” appearing in the “land of the foul stink”:

An image of light was revealed
in the dwelling place of beasts;
An image of light was revealed
in the land of the foul stink.

Psalms of Thomas VIII, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.214

In another psalm, the Word metaphorically refers to the manifestation of the masters – the “brethren” or “sons of light” – as a “part” of his divine “robe”, of his innate garment of spiritual light that is revealed as a master in this world of darkness. “My sweet Fragrance,” says the Word, “sweetened their stink”:

A part therefore went forth from my robe:
it went, it lightened their darkness;
My sweet Fragrance went, it sweetened their stink;
My brethren, the sons of light, went:
they brought peace to their land.

Psalms of Thomas II, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.205

The miracle story of Lazarus, then, like many of the narratives in John’s gospel, seems to be an allegory or parable. Even though such stories appear to describe real events, the nature of the incidents and the stylized dialogue mark them as the author’s means of conveying mystic truth. This method was not his own invention. As a means of conveying philosophy, dialogues had been in vogue for at least five hundred years. They are used in such widely disparate works as the biblical *Book of Job* (possibly c.6th BCE) and the Socratic dialogues of Plato (c.427–347 BCE). The allegorizing of historical events was also a literary style in ancient times, especially in Judaism. There are some good examples of this in the Bible and also in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

An interesting comment in the writings of fourth-century Christian, Ephraim Syrus, supports the allegorical interpretation of the story of Jesus and Lazarus. Ephraim is disagreeing with the teachings of the gnostic Bar Daisan, whom he quotes as saying:

Our Lord says, “Everyone who keeps my Word, he will never taste death.”⁴ But lo, all those who kept it have died.

Bar Daisan; cf. EPR2 80 p.lxxvi

It is a good point, and Bar Daisan – who is quoting John’s gospel – goes on to point out that it is the soul that is raised up, not the body. In an extract where the “bridal chamber of light” refers to the heavenly realms, Bar Daisan is also reported as saying that those

who have kept the Word of our Lord, from within the body, they have been exalted to the bridal chamber of light.

Bar Daisan; cf. EPR2 81 p.lxxvii

Ephraim does not agree with this and, in his attempted refutation, he observes:

For if Lazarus, when he died, had gone up to the bridal chamber of light, it was an injury our Lord did to him in returning him to his body, the prison house.

Ephraim Syrus; cf. EPR2 85 p.lxxvii

Ephraim is assuming the historical authenticity of the Lazarus miracle story, and says that if Lazarus had died, then, by Bar Daisan’s teaching, he would have gone to the “bridal chamber of light”, the heavenly regions. In which case, says Ephraim, Jesus would have done Lazarus a disservice by bringing him back to physical life. Ephraim believes the souls of those who have died to be in some intermediate state – “hindered in every place, in all depths and limbos”⁵ – awaiting the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus. Hence his consternation and disagreement with Bar Daisan.

Ephraim’s observation, though intended as a refutation, is actually in line with the teachings of mystics regarding physical life. Their intention is to teach their disciples how to release themselves from the body. Consequently, they are hardly likely to induce a soul to return to a dead body, which it had recently vacated. What purpose would have been achieved by it?

Incidentally, it is of interest that Ephraim is still sufficiently in touch with the mystical side of Jesus’ teachings to understand that the “prison house” is the body. He is living at a time when gnosticism was prevalent and was practised openly. This kind of understanding was increasingly lost from Christianity as it developed into an organized religion, gaining political power and status in the Roman Empire.

See also: **awakening** (8.1), **death, dying while living, resurrection** (8.4).

1. Material taken from “The Raising of Lazarus,” in *PSW* pp.46–55.
2. *John* 1:14, *KJV*.

3. *John* 5:1ff.
4. *Cf. John* 8:51.
5. Ephraim Syrus, *Prose Refutations* 81, *EPR2* p.lxxvii.

línsǐbùqiè (C) *Lit.* to face (*lín*) death (*sǐ*) without (*bù*) timidity (*qiè*); being at death's door without fear; equanimity in the face of death, fearless acceptance of death.

In order to achieve spiritual liberation, a Daoist practises every day – first to still the body, and then to still the mind. Without dying to the physical world, he cannot attain spiritual immortality. The true Daoist therefore has no fear of death, seeing it as a natural and even welcome transformation from his present level of consciousness to a higher plane. In fact, he may give little thought to either life or death. As master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says, “Birth and death (*shēngsǐ*) exist only in the mind (*xīn*).”¹

Zhuāngzǐ (c.C3rd BCE) says that mystics or “true men (*zhēnrén*)” accept death however and whenever it happens. They are impartial towards both life and death, neither clinging to one nor dreading the other. Pointing to mystics of earlier times as role models, Zhuāngzǐ says that they were characterized by an inner simplicity and acceptance:

The true men (*zhēnrén*) of ancient times knew nothing of the love of life (*shēng*) or the hatred of death (*sǐ*). Entrance into life gave them no joy; exit from it awakened no resistance. With equanimity, they came and went. They did not forget what their beginning had been; they did not enquire what their end might be. They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death) and returned (to their state before life). Thus there was in them what is called the lack of any mental resistance to the *Dào* and of any human attempt to provide assistance to heaven. Such were they who are called true men (*zhēnrén*). Being such, their minds were free of all thought; their demeanour was still and unmoved; their foreheads beamed simplicity.

Zhuāngzǐ 6; *cf. TT1* p.238

Having become one with the *Dào*, a perfected man (*zhìrén*) is aware of the temporary nature of material existence. Because he can leave the physical and access the spiritual at will, he is afraid of nothing. He accepts his physical death with equanimity, preserving a peaceful and tranquil disposition even in the face of disaster or calamity:

The perfect man (*zhìrén*) is a spiritual being. Were the ocean itself to be boiled away, he would not feel hot. Were the Milky Way to be frozen hard, he would not feel cold. Were the mountains to be riven with thunder and the great deep to be tossed about by storms, he would

not tremble. In such cases, he would mount the clouds of heaven and, driving the sun and moon before him, would pass beyond the limits of this external world to where death and life (*sǐshēng*) have no victory over man.

Zhuāngzǐ 2; cf. *CTT* p.44

Having attained union with the *Dào*, the adept accepts physical death as a natural consequence of life and something to be welcomed. Those who strive for spiritual immortality seek freedom from duality, making no distinction between life and death. Achieving this, they return to their original nature – “the state before life”:

When you know the vastness of the universe, neither life nor death (*sǐshēng*) can take anything away from you. When you know harmony from nurturing life (*yǎngshēng*), you will no longer be confined to the world. When you know the bliss of the state before life (*shēng*), you will have no fear of death (*sǐ*).

Huáinánzǐ 7, *DZ*1184

Understanding the nature of transformation and fully accepting death frees a person from the concerns and the anxieties of both life and death – thereby facilitating one’s spiritual departure from the physical plane. Both the understanding, and the true freedom it brings, come from experience of oneness with the *Dào*.

See also: *sǐ*.

1. Liú Yīmíng, *Yīnfú jīng zhù*, ZW255, *DSI*.

mahāsamādhi (S/H) *Lit.* great (*mahā*) absorption (*samādhi*); total absorption, complete contemplation; the physical death of one who is an evolved soul.

See also: **samādhi** (8.1).

maraṇa (S/Pa), **marnā**, **marañ**, **maran** (H/Pu), **marai** (Pu), **’chi ba** (T), **sǐ** (C), **shi** (J) *Lit.* death, dying, ruin, destruction; the departure of the soul and mind from the body.

Death is a fact of life. This world has only one means of entry and one of exit. Yet the true nature of life and death is one of the primary mysteries of human existence, and spiritual teachers have universally recommended addressing the conundrum:

Who am I? How came this world? What is it?
 How came death (*marāṇa*) and birth (*janman*)?
 Thus enquire within yourself –
 great will be the benefit.

Annapūrṇa Upanishad 1:40, PU p.73 (n.5)

In the well-known story of the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, the young seeker Nachiketas receives three boons from *Yama*, the lord of death, but it is his third boon, an answer to the question, “What is death?”, that occupies much of the story. At first, *Yama* is reluctant to grant the boon. “Ask me for anything you desire,” says *Yama*, “but don’t ask me about death”:

Whatever desires are hard to obtain
 in this world of mortals (*martyaloka*) –
 Ask for them as you will.
 Here are fair maidens with chariots and musical instruments,
 the like of which cannot be won by men.
 I give them to you, and they shall wait upon you.
 But, O Nachiketas, don’t ask me about death (*marāṇa*).

Kaṭha Upanishad 1:1.25

But Nachiketas is not so easily put off. He is not interested in anything of this world, and remains persistent. Ultimately, after putting his sincerity to the test, *Yama* concedes. In his reply, he tells Nachiketas that in reality the true self or soul has never been born and will never die. Here, in keeping with the mystical philosophy of the *Upanishads*, little distinction is made between the divine ocean of Self or Soul and the seemingly individual self or soul; for at the highest level of consciousness, there is no difference between them.

Most human beings, begins *Yama*, are so ignorant of the divine Reality and the immortal nature of their own true essence that they are even unaware of their own ignorance:

Fools, dwelling in the midst of ignorance (*avidyā*),
 considering themselves wise and learned,
 go round and round, staggering to and fro,
 like the blind leading the blind.
 The hereafter is never revealed to the heedless child,
 befuddled by the glamour of wealth.
 Thinking, “Only this world exists; there is no other,”
 again and again he comes under my sway.

Kaṭha Upanishad 1:2.5–6

The true self is never born, and never dies:

The knowing self is never born (*jayate*),
 nor does it die (*mṛiyate*) at any time.
 It sprang from nothing, and nothing sprang from it.
 Unborn, eternal, abiding, and primeval,
 it is not slain when the body is slain.

If the slayer thinks that he slays,
 or if the slain think that he is slain,
 neither of them understand aright.
 It neither slays nor is it slain.

Smaller than the small, greater than the great,
 the Self (*Ātman*) dwells in the heart of every creature.
 He who is free from desires, his sorrows ended,
 beholds the glory of the Self (*Ātman*),
 through tranquillity of the mind and the senses.

Seated, it travels far; lying down, it journeys everywhere.
 Who else but myself can know that effulgent, ever-delighted One?
 Knowing that supreme, all-pervading Self –
 dwelling bodiless in impermanent bodies –
 the wise man grieves not.

This Self cannot be attained by studying the scriptures,
 nor by intellect, nor even by much learning.
 It is attained only by he whom It chooses.
 To such a one, the Self (*Ātman*) reveals Its own nature.

Kaṭha Upanishad 1:2.18–23

The true Self is something other than the body. The body dies, but the eternal Essence remains untouched:

What is it that remains when the owner of the body,
 that dwells within the body, is separated and released from it?
 Truly, this is That.

Not by the *prāṇa* (life energy), which goes up,
 nor by *apāna*, which goes down, does any mortal live.
 They live by something else, on which these two depend.

Listen, and I will explain the mystery of *Brahman* to you,
 and how the soul fares after meeting death.

Some enter a womb in order to become embodied;
Others go to plants, according to their deeds (*karma*),
and according to their thoughts.

He who remains awake in those who sleep,
the Being (*Purusha*) who shapes desire after desire:
That is the Pure, the *Brahman* –
truly, That is also called the Immortal.
Truly, this is That.

As fire is one, but having entered this world
assumes different forms, becoming alike in form to them –
So too does the one Self (*Ātman*), dwelling within all beings,
assume different forms, becoming alike in form to them –
but is yet beyond them. . . .

Just as the one sun, by which all eyes see,
is not affected by blemishes in the eyes that see it –
Even so the One that dwells within all beings
remains untouched by the sufferings of the world,
because He is beyond it.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:2.4–9, 11

Other *Upanishads* have said the same. When the soul leaves the body, it travels on, helpless and ignorant under the influences of its past deeds:

Different from the waking, dreaming, sleeping and swooning states,
instilling fear into all living creatures from *Brahmā* (the creator deity)
to a tuft of grass, and the cause of relinquishing the gross body is the
state of dying (*marāṇa-avasthā*).

Withdrawing from the organs of action, the organs of perception,
and the subtle life energies (*prāṇas*), the incarnate soul (*jīva*) attended
by its desires and actions (*karma*), and wrapped in ignorance and the
subtle elements, goes to another world. Through the ripening of the
fruit of past actions (*karma*), he attains no rest, like a worm caught in
a whirlpool. The desire for liberation (*moksha*) arises in human beings
at the end of many lives, through the ripening of the fruit of their past
good deeds (*karma*). Then, seeking out a true master (*sadguru*) and
faithfully serving him for a long time, he investigates the nature of
bondage and liberation (*moksha*).

Paingala Upanishad 2:11–12

Even so, it is actually the Divine, by His own design, who is seemingly enmeshed in the illusion (*māyā*) of existence:

The omniscient Lord joined with a particle of *māyā*, and taking on the various bodies (gross, subtle, and causal), becomes deluded by *māyā*, and arrives at the state of the individual (incarnate) soul (*jīvātman*). By identification with the three bodies, He finds Himself in the situation of being both doer and reaper. Performing the functions of waking, dreaming, sleeping, swooning and death (*maraṇa*), He becomes distressed, revolving round and round, like a potter's wheel, seeming to take birth and die (*jāta-mṛita*).

Paingala Upanishad 1:12

In its essence, the soul is always free from the bodily nature:

All souls are intrinsically free from old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa*). But by imagining senility and death (*jarā-maraṇa*), and being engrossed in that thought, they go astray.

Gauḍapāda, Kārikā 4:10, on Māṇḍūkya Upanishad; cf. EUSG2 p.329

Mystics point out that since the only certain thing about life is death, it is worth making a study of the subject. But unreasoned, off-the-cuff assertions as to its nature by those lacking personal experience are insufficient and inadequate. Mystics say that the death of the body does not mean the extinction of life, but only the release of the soul and the mind from physical bondage. The future path of the soul and mind depend upon the attachments and tendencies of the mind, the soul being compelled to go wherever the mind leads. This may be to a stay in a heavenly or hellish realm, for a shorter or longer period, followed by rebirth in another body, not necessarily human. Mystics therefore advise that it is a good idea for a person to learn how to go through the process of dying while still living in a human form, so that he may be prepared for the body's demise. But, for the most part, the pressing nature of the affairs of life makes people forgetful of what they really are and of their inevitable death:

The world is chasing after worldly affairs: caught and bound,
it does not understand contemplative meditation.

The foolish, ignorant, self-willed (*manmukh*)
has forgotten birth and death (*jamaṇ maraṇ*).

Those whom the *guru* has protected are saved,
contemplating the true Word (*Sabad*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1010, AGK

Death is certain, but its timing is unpredictable. It therefore makes sense to be prepared for it:

Everyone has to die (*marṇā*) some day. Whether man or beast, rich or poor, healthy or diseased, nobody escapes death (*mawt*). All have to pass through its gate. The soul that has taken the physical form has to leave it. Everybody knows that he has to quit this world some day, but he knows not when.

Death (*marṇā*) is real, but life (in this world) is unreal. “Dust you are, to dust you shall return.”¹ We have never cared to think about what kind of a journey lies beyond the gates of death (*mawt*). We lament the death (*maran*) of others. But actually, we should be concerned with our own end and should prepare ourselves for our life in the next world (*parlok*).

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters; cf. PMS1 p.100

In traditional Indian thought, the “threefold miseries” are things intrinsic to the body and mind, things external to oneself, and the influence of supernatural beings:

Dying (*maran*) is the truth of the world.
 One should then die such a death (*marnā*)
 that he should never have to die again (*pheri nā mariye*),
 Lest the fragile body should continue
 to be subjected to the threefold miseries.
 This life is a snare of old age and death (*maran*);
 Nothing here accompanies anyone:
 Gold, diamonds, horses, and elephants –
 all are snatched away by the King of Death (*Nāth*).

Dariyā Sāhib, Granthāvalī 1, Shabd 20:18, DGI p.148; cf. DSSK p.142

Only genuine contact with God and the creative power will be of help at the time of death:

Whoever has the silent vision (*darshana*) of Him,
 merges in the boundless Supreme,
 crossing the ocean of birth and death (*janma-maraṇa*).
 Actions and religious observances are of no avail,
 only the company of saints can help!
 Only initiation (*dīkshā*), desireless duty (*nishkāma-dharma*),
 and worship of the one Letter (*eka Akshara*) help.

Bhūma Bhoi, Tahanku jebanā; cf. in SSI8 pp.268–69

For those who learn to die while living, who come to know the nature of death, it holds no fear. Rather, it comes as a welcome release from the problems of life in the body:

Kabīr, the world is afraid of death (*marne*) –
 that death fills my mind with bliss.
 It is only by death (*marne*)
 that perfect, supreme bliss (*ānand*) is obtained.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 1365, AGK

That death (*marṇai*) which terrifies the entire world –
 the nature of that death (*marnā*) has been revealed to me
 through the *guru*'s Word (*Sabad*).
 Now, how shall I die (*marao*)?
 My mind has already accepted death (*maran*),
 (*i.e.* I have already experienced death within myself).
 Those who do not know the Lord,
 die (*mar*) over and over again, and then depart.

Everyone says, "I will die, I will die (*marno maran*)."
 But he alone becomes immortal (*amar*),
 who dies (*marai*) in *sahaj* (profound peace).
 Says Kabīr, my mind is filled with bliss;
 My doubts have been eliminated,
 and I am in ecstasy.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 327, AGK

My death (*maran*) is dead (*maron*),
 and I have become immortal (*amar*);
 All consciousness of my body has gone,
 and the very source (of death) has been annihilated.
 There was a flood of passions in my life,
 but now it has ebbed and I face this life with calmness.
 The main aim of my life, says Tukā,
 has been fulfilled in the right manner.

Tukārām, Gāthā 2348, STG2 p.470; cf. TCSD p.110

I experienced my own death (*maran*) –
 it was a festive occasion beyond compare.
 Now my joy fills all the three worlds,
 and I rejoice in being a part of the universal Soul.
 Until now I was confined to this world alone:
 ego was the barrier separating me from the Lord.
 Now that I am devoid of ego, my joy knows no bounds –
 gone forever is the mire of birth and death (*janma-maran*),
 and I am free of the restrictions of 'me' and 'mine'.

Now the Lord lets me live in His house
and my love abides in Him.
Whatever I have experienced within, says Tukā,
I now reveal to the world.

Tukārām, Gāthā 2669, STG2 p.583, TCSD p.116

Kabīr, the world is dying – dying to death,
but no one knows how to truly die.
Whoever dies (*marnī*), let him die such a death (*marnā*)
that he does not have to die (*marai*) again.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 555, MMS

The world is terrified of death (*marṇai*):
everyone longs to live.
By *guru*'s grace, who dies (*marai*) while yet alive,
understands the Lord's will.
Nānak, one who dies (*marai*) such a death (*marai*)
lives forever.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 555, AGK

In Buddhism, *jarā-marāṇa* (old age and death) is the twelfth and final link (*nidāna*) in the chain of causation or dependent origination (S. *pratītya-samutpāda*, Pa. *paṭicca-samuppāda*) that leads to suffering. It marks the end of the body, and the ego or personality that defines the individual. The eleventh link is birth (*jāti*), followed by old age and death, as illustrated by the saying, *jāti-paccayā jarā-marāṇam* (dependent on birth is old age and death). Sickness (S. *vyādhī*), too, is a part of the process of decline. Impermanence and decay are understood as inherent aspects of the world, and death of the old is essential to make way for birth of the new:

Look at this decorated puppet, full of sores,
assembled from many parts, diseased, in constant need of attention,
in which nothing lasts, nothing persists.
Thoroughly worn out is this body, a brood of diseases, impermanent.
This heap of corruption will fall apart:
truly, death (*marāṇa*) is the end of life (*jīvita*).

Like gourds cast aside in autumn are these grey bones.
What pleasure is there in looking at them?
It is a city built of bones, plastered with flesh and blood:
its inhabitants are old age and death, pride and deceit.

Even the splendid carriages of kings wear out.
 So too does the body reach old age.
 But the Truth (*Dhamma*) of the saints (*santa*) never grows old –
 that is what the saints (*santa*) themselves proclaim.

Dhammapada 11:2–6

According to the legend of the Buddha's early life, the young Prince Siddhartha, cosseted within the palace walls, was unaware of death, and his first sight of a dead body during an excursion outside was one of the four signs (*S. chatur-nimitta*) that lead him to question the nature of life, and subsequently to renounce the world in search of enlightenment and liberation. Buddhist texts contain constant exhortations to make use of life as a preparation for death, because it can come at any moment, and nothing but the *Dharma* will be of value at that time.

There are doctrinal variations among the different traditions describing what actually takes place at death and what it is that is reborn. The Tibetan *Bardo Thödol Chenmo* ('Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate State'), for instance, popularly known in English as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, provides instructions on how to navigate the after-death state (*bardo*) and describes rituals to be performed by the living to help the passage of the dead. The scholarly *Abhidhamma* of the *Theravāda* tradition, on the other hand, provides a detailed and alternative analysis of the process of death and rebirth in which there is no interval between the two.

Marāṇa is also understood in the *Abhidhamma* to be happening continuously within the individual continuum of consciousness (*bhavanga*), as each instant vanishes and is replaced by the next. The passing of each moment and the death of the body are both the result of the inherent impermanence (*S. anitya*) of the world and the human mind-body combination:

In the ultimate sense, the life-moment of living beings is extremely short, being only as much as the occurrence of a single conscious moment. Just as a chariot wheel, when it is rolling, rolls only on one point of its tyre and, when it is at rest, rests only on one point, so too, the life of living beings lasts only for a single moment of consciousness. When that consciousness has ceased, the being is said to have ceased, for it is said: "In a past moment of consciousness did he live, not 'does he live', not 'will he live'. In a future moment of consciousness will he live, not 'did he live', not 'does he live'. In the present moment of consciousness does he live, not 'did he live', not 'will he live'."

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:39, PTSV p.238; cf. PPVM p.233

The suffering of death (*Pa. marāṇa-dukkha*) is listed in Buddhist texts as one of the eight forms of suffering, and mindfulness of or reflection on death

(Pa. *marāṇānussati*) is the seventh of the ten recollections (*anussati*). The meditator reflects upon the brevity and uncertainty of life and the many ways by which it can be suddenly terminated, the intention being to strengthen spiritual resolve.²

Death and rebirth in Buddhism are understood to take place in any of the six realms of existence that lie within the sphere of transmigration. These are the realms of gods, demigods, human beings, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell-beings. It is the continuous cycle of death and rebirth in any of these realms, according to the dictates of *karma*, that constitutes the essential problem faced by sentient beings. As Buddhaghosa writes:

Just as the risen sun moves on towards its setting and never turns back even for a little while from wherever it has got to, or just as a mountain torrent sweeps by with a rapid current, ever flowing and rushing on and never turning back even for a little while, so too this living being travels on towards death (*marāṇa*) from the time when he is born, and he never turns back even for a little while. Hence it is said:

Right from the very day a man
has been conceived inside a womb,
he cannot but go on and on,
nor going can he once turn back.³

And whilst he goes on thus, death is as near to him as drying up is to rivulets in the summer heat, as falling is to the fruits of trees when the sap reaches their attachments in the morning, as breaking is to clay pots tapped by a mallet, as vanishing is to dewdrops touched by the sun's rays. Hence it is said:

The nights and days go slipping by
as life keeps dwindling steadily
till mortals' span, like water pools
in failing rills, is all used up.⁴

As there is fear, when fruits are ripe,
that in the morning they will fall,
so mortals are in constant fear,
when they are born, that they will die.

And as the fate of pots of clay
once fashioned by the potter's hand,
or small or big or baked or raw,
condemns them to be broken up,
so mortals' life leads but to death.⁵

The dewdrop on the blade of grass
 vanishes when the sun comes up;
 Such is a human span of life;
 So, mother, do not hinder me.⁶

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:11–12, PTSV p.231, PPVM p.227

Jainism, like other spiritual traditions, also sees death as the inevitable consequence of birth and decay. It is viewed as a transition from one state of being to another, when the *āyusha karma* (duration-of-life *karma*) has been completed. For the enlightened, death leads to complete liberation; but for most, death is followed by rebirth. The creation is itself designed in this manner:

The role of matter is to contribute to the pleasure and pain,
 life and death (*maraṇa*) of living beings.

Āchārya Umāswāmī, Tattvārtha Sūtra 5:20; cf. TSMD p.89

The twentieth-century *Samansuttam* has much to say on the subject that is in keeping with Buddhism and other traditions:

The pains of birth (*jamma*), old age (*jarā*)
 and death (*maraṇa*) are known to all,
 yet no one develops disregard for sense objects.
 Oh, how tight is this knot of conceit? ...

Birth (*jamma*) is painful, old age (*jarā*) is painful,
 disease and death (*maraṇa*) are painful.
 Oh, painful indeed is worldly existence (*saṃsāra*),
 where living beings suffer affliction. ...

Attachment and aversion are seeds of *karma*:
karma originates from infatuation;
Karma is the root cause of birth and death (*jai-maraṇa*):
 birth and death (*jai-maraṇa*) are said to be sources of misery. ...

Since living beings caught in the grip of the miseries
 of birth, old age and death (*jai-jarā-maraṇa*),
 have no happiness in this mundane existence,
 liberation is therefore worthy of attainment. ...

Transmigration within the four kinds of living being,
 birth, old-age, death (*jai-jarā-maraṇa*), disease, sorrow, a family,
 a place of birth ... – none of these belongs to a soul. ...

A real monk maintains his equanimity in success and failure,
happiness and misery, life and death (*marāṇa*),
censure and praise, and honour and dishonour. . . .

Know that birth (*jamma*) is accompanied by death (*marāṇa*),
youth is succeeded by old age (*jarā*), wealth is perishable.
Therefore one should reflect that everything is transient. . . .

There is no place in this world, not even as tiny as the tip of a hair,
where a soul has not suffered
the pangs of births (*jamma*) and deaths (*marāṇa*) several times.

This ocean of mundane existence is difficult to cross over:
many are the crocodiles in the form of disease,
old-age (*jarā*), and death (*marāṇa*);
Vast is its volume of water in the form of constant birth and death,
the result of which is terrible misery. . . .

For living beings who are floating
in the currents of old age (*jarā*) and death (*marāṇa*),
religion is the best island, resting place, and supreme shelter. . . .

The man possessed of a calm disposition must die,
the man possessed of a cowardly disposition too must die;
So when death (*marāṇa*) is inevitable in any case,
it is better to die possessed of a calm disposition. . . .

He who is born into a royal family
and regularly performs military exercises
will become competent to win all wars:
Similarly, a monk who regularly engages himself in meditation
and practises the vows of monastic life conquers his mind,
and will become competent to practise meditation
at his death (*marāṇa*). . . .

Where there is neither pain nor pleasure,
neither suffering nor obstacle,
neither birth (*janana*) nor death (*marāṇa*), there is *nirvāṇa*. . . .

An individual remains the same person from his birth (*jamma*)
until the time of death (*marāṇa*),
though he assumes the various states of childhood, and so on.

Samansuttam 51, 55, 71, 73, 182, 347, 507, 512–13,
525, 569, 583–84, 617, 667; cf. *SSJV*

As in other traditions, Jains consider a person's state of mind at the time of death to be significant, for after death the soul goes wherever the mind takes it, according to its inclinations and the soul's karmic burden. Negative mental states are believed to have an impact on where the soul will go after it has left the body, where it will be reborn, and the kind of destiny that it will receive. Violent deaths, including suicide, involve causing harm (*hiṃsā*) and lead to the ingress of bad *karma*, which will also influence the place of rebirth. To maintain a peaceful state of mind at the time of death, practices such as the confession of sins, thinking of the *Tīrthankaras* and enlightened ones, and the repetition of *mantras*, especially the *namaskāra mantra*, are recommended.

Nonetheless, the predominant influence on the destiny of the next life is the *karma* created during previous lives, especially the life that has just ended. According to the quality of an individual's life, a soul may go to one of the several heavens or the eight hells for some time before being reborn. It is said that the eight hells get progressively colder.

Jain texts list various kinds of death. One of the more ancient writers, Āchārya Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE), identifies three conditions in which people may be when they die:⁷

Bāla-maraṇa. A fool's (*bāla*) death; ignorant or unenlightened death; death in a state of spiritual ignorance regarding the true nature of death, without appreciation of its inevitability, while still deeply attached to life, but without ever realizing its purpose, and consequently with a fear of death. A "fool (*bāla*)" in this context refers to a spiritually ignorant person. Kundakunda says that the "fool" may have the right faith, but is unable to live up to it.

Paṇḍita-maraṇa. The death of a wise man (*paṇḍita*); enlightened death; death with an understanding of its true nature, an appreciation of its inevitability, and an awareness of the purpose of life, having therefore become detached from life and with no fear of death; the aspiration of all spiritually minded people; the death of one who has fully observed all vows, and who possesses right belief, right knowledge, and right conduct; also called *sakāma-maraṇa* (willing death); the death of a mendicant who has attained a high degree of realization of his own self or soul.

Bāla-paṇḍita-maraṇa. The death of a 'foolish wise man'; the death of a layperson who has accepted one or more of the layperson's vows; a mixed, wise and ignorant form of death.

Other texts and commentators also speak of:

Akāma-marāṇa. Unwilling death, not wanting to die; fruitless death; also suicide; equivalent to *bāla-marāṇa* (a fool's death).

Bāla-bāla-marāṇa. Death of an utter fool (*bāla*); the death of someone who has led a depraved life.

Sakāma-marāṇa. Willing death, welcome death; the death of someone who is not afraid to die; fruitful death; death faced in a peaceful and composed attitude of mind; equivalent to the death of a wise man (*pañḍita-marāṇa*).

Pañḍita-pañḍita-marāṇa. Death of a supremely wise person (*pañḍita*); death of an enlightened soul; believed to be the only kind of death that is not followed by rebirth.

Following the Jain predilection for analysis, seventeen kinds of death are listed in the *Bhagavatī Ārāḍhanā* (c.C2nd CE), the *Samavāyāṅga Sūtra* (c.C3rd–4th CE) and the *Uttarādhyaṇa Nirvyūti* (c.C5th CE),⁸ including the three mentioned by Kundakunda. Some texts, like the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, mention only fourteen.⁹ The seventeen kinds of death, described in the various texts with some variations between them,¹⁰ come into the two main categories of an ignorant person's death and a wise person's death. Ignorant kinds of death are described as:

Bāla-marāṇa. A fool's (*bāla*) death; also, suicide by violent means.

Bāla-pañḍita-marāṇa. The death of a 'foolish wise man'.

Avīchi-marāṇa. Death arising from completion of the lifespan (*āyusha*) *karma*. *Avīchi* means 'waveless', implying here that the wave of present-life *karma* has ended.

Avadhi-marāṇa. Death and rebirth in the same category of species, such as human. *Avadhi* means 'limit'.

Ātyantika-marāṇa. Death in which the soul is reborn in a different category of species. *Ātyantika* means 'continuous'.

Valaya-marāṇa. Death from starvation. The meaning of *valaya* (bracelet) in this context is somewhat obscure.

Vashārta-marāṇa. Death arising from over-indulgence.

Antaḥ-shalya-marāṇa. Dying from the wound of an arrow, a spear or any iron-tipped weapon (*shalya*) that is embedded in (*antar*) the body. Internal *antaḥ-shalya-marāṇa* is to die without atoning for wrongdoing because the wounds of pride and shame are embedded in the mind.

Tadbhāva-marāṇa. Death by 'becoming (*tadbhāva*)'; of uncertain meaning, variously interpreted as embracing death in this life, or death followed by taking birth in the same species as before.

Vaiḥāyasa-marāṇa. Death by hanging or falling from a precipice. Literally, *vaiḥāyasa* means being suspended in the air.

Grīdhaprishṭha-marāṇa. Death by entering the carcass (*prishṭha*) of a large, dead animal like an elephant or camel, so that one's body is

consumed by carrion-eating birds such as vultures, kites and so on, along with that of the animal. *Griddha* means ‘great desire for’. The *Samavāyāṅga* mentions two varieties of *griddhapriṣṭha-maraṇa*. The first is desiring that one’s body be left for carrion-eating birds, and the second is to be eaten along with the dead body of the animal.

Wise deaths are described as:

Paṇḍita-maraṇa. A wise man’s (*paṇḍita*) death.

Chhadmastha-maraṇa. The death of a common man (*chhadmastha*), who has not attained omniscience, but who is nonetheless an accomplished spiritual practitioner, and has attained advanced understanding of the scriptures, as well as clairvoyant and telepathic abilities.

Kevalī-maraṇa. The death of a *kevalī* (omniscient or enlightened one).

Bhaktapratyākhyāna-maraṇa. Death by giving up eating and drinking; a form of *sallekhanā* (voluntarily relinquishing life by fasting to the death).

Inginī-maraṇa. Death by giving up eating and drinking, and staying at one place, either in a forest or normal human habitation. The practitioner can attend to his own needs, but should not accept the services of others. The Prakrit *ingini* (S. *ingita*) means ‘movement’.

Pāvogamana-maraṇa. Seeking death while remaining entirely motionless; an even more restrictive extension of the above. The practitioner lies down motionless in body, mind and speech, even permitting small creatures to bite him, but neither attends to his own needs nor permits others to render him any service. The Prakrit *pāvogamana*, from the Sanskrit *prāyopagamana* (‘seeking death’), is often incorrectly Sanskritized by Jain commentators as *pādapopagamana*, which implies remaining unmoving like a fallen tree (*pādapa*).¹¹

The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* observes that although there are many ways in which a person can die, there are really only two kinds of death – the death of the spiritually ignorant (*bāla*, the “fool”) – of which thirteen are listed – and the death of the spiritually minded (*paṇḍita*, “the wise man”).¹² The death of a wise man, continues the text, comes about by rejecting all food and drink, and can take place either in some human dwelling or in a lonely place. Dying in this way, the author maintains, reduces the time spent in “hellish, lower-than-human, human, and celestial lives”.

The writer is speaking of the practice of *sallekhanā*, a gradual easing into death in which a mendicant or layperson who has a terminal illness gradually withdraws from everything in life, and finally encourages the end by ceasing to eat and drink. Monks and nuns who have an infirmity that prevents them from observing their vows may also choose to end their life by *sallekhanā*. The final end of *sallekhanā* is *samādhi-maraṇa* (death in meditation, death in a peaceful state of mind) or *saṃnyāsa-maraṇa* (death

by renunciation), both terms having become synonymous with *sallekhanā*. Jains distinguish *sallekhanā* from suicide, explaining that suicide is done out of despair and inability to face life, and leads to *akāma-maraṇa* (fruitless death), which is the death of a fool (*bāla-maraṇa*). *Sallekhanā* is regarded as *sakāma-maraṇa* (fruitful death), which is the death of a wise man (*pañḍita-maraṇa*).

The *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* identifies the death of a wise man (*pañḍita-maraṇa*) with willing death (*sakāma-maraṇa*), and the death of a fool (*bāla-maraṇa*) with unwilling death (*akāma-maraṇa*), going on to elaborate further on the theme.¹³

See also: **ātmaghāta, bardo, death, death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism, jīte jī marnā, maraṇasati (8.5), mṛityu, samlekhanā, sī.**

1. *Genesis* 3:19; cf. *KJV*.
2. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 7:70 (*Araka Sutta*), 8:74 (*Dutiya Maraṇasati Sutta*), *PTSA4* pp.138, 320; Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 8:4–7, 41, *PTSV* pp.230, 239.
3. *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā*, *PTSJ4* p.494.
4. *Samyutta Nikāya* 4:10, *Āyu Sutta*, *PTSSI* p.109.
5. *Sutta Nipāta* 3:8, *Salla Sutta* 576–77, *PTSN* p.113.
6. *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā*, *PTSJ4* p.122.
7. Kundakunda, *Mūlachāra* 10:31, *KMPS*, in *CJTT* p.278.
8. Āchārya Shivārya, *Bhagavatī Ārādhanā* 26ff.; *Samavāyāṅga Sūtra* 17, *Uttarādhyayana Nirvyukti*, in *DECC*.
9. *Bhagavatī Sūtra* 2:1, *SBSI* pp.163–64.
10. See also *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* 1:7.8.7–21, *SBE22* pp.75–77; *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* 5:1–32; and *Abhayadeva-vṛitti*, *Mūlārādhanā*, *Sthānāṅga*, *Uttarādhyayana-vṛitti*, in *DECC*.
11. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* p.166; cf. Devagupta, *Navapada-prakarana* 129–35, *NPLD*, in *JYMS* p.166; *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* 7:8.7–21, *SBE22* pp.75–77.
12. *Bhagavatī Sūtra* 2:1, *SBSI* pp.163–64.
13. *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* 5:1–32; cf. *SBE45* pp.19–24.

marañāsanna kamma (Pa) *Lit.* near-death (*maraṇa-āsanna*) *kamma*; death-proximate *kamma*; according to the *Abhidhamma* (analytical) tradition of *Theravāda Buddhism*, the thought process and associated mental image that comes into the mind of a person immediately prior to death. See **death and rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism**.

marg (P) *Lit.* death. See **mawt**.

martyr One who chooses to suffer and die rather than renounce his beliefs, especially those of a religious nature; mystically, one who dies while living, by going through the experience of death while still living in the body. The word comes from the Greek, *martyrs* (witness). In this sense, all those who bore witness to their faith, especially those who suffered hardship or persecution on that account, were known as martyrs. Only gradually, during the first few centuries of Christianity, did *martyrs* come to be applied specifically to those who had died for their faith.

Martyrdom has always been highly esteemed in traditional accounts of early Christian history, and many during those times courted such a death in the belief that it ensured the forgiveness of sins and certain entry to heaven. St Augustine writes that “they knew” a martyr’s death “would bring them salvation and eternal glory”.¹ It is clear, however, that there was no universal agreement on the issue. Clement of Alexandria (c.150–215) is writing of some gnostics groups (“heretics”), when he says:

Some of the heretics who have misunderstood the Lord, have both an impious and cowardly love of life, saying that the true martyrdom is *gnōsis* of the only true God, . . . and that a man is a self-murderer and a suicide who makes confession by death.

Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies 4:4; cf. WCA2 p.147

Here, martyrdom is understood by the gnostic ‘heretics’ to mean dying to the self in the quest for inner experience or *gnōsis* of God. Both Eusebius and Epiphanius include Basilidēs among such ‘heretics’,² but there were certainly many others. Clement of Alexandria quotes Basilidēs, who maintains that those who suffer the “tribulations” of martyrdom are simply being permitted to make redress in an honourable manner for the effect of the misdeeds committed in previous lives.³

The gnostic Nag Hammadi text, the *Testimony of Truth* is also explicit. Spiritual perfection, says the writer, does not come by courting death in the name of Jesus. Perfection and eternal life require help from the “life-giving Word”:

But when they are ‘perfected’ by martyrdom, this is what they think to themselves: “If we deliver ourselves to death for the sake of the Name, we will be saved.” Such matters are not settled like that. . . . They do not have the life-giving Word.

Testimony of Truth 34; cf. NHS15 pp.132–35

Some scholars have quoted a passage from the *Apocryphon of James* in support of the idea that some gnostics supported martyrdom: “Become seekers of death, like the dead who seek for life.”⁴ But this exhortation is actually the converse: to seek experience of the process of dying while still living, of

leaving the body at will through spiritual practice. Human beings are already dead – spiritually speaking – and are desperately in need of spiritual life.

See also: **dying while living.**

1. St Augustine, *City of God* 8:19; cf. *CGAP* p.326.
2. Eusebius, *History of the Church* 4:7.7; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 24:4.1.
3. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 4:12, in *GS* p.442, *WCA2* p.175.
4. *Apocryphon of James* 6; cf. *NHS22* pp.36–37.

mate (Mo) *Lit.* death; sickness, illness, disease; misfortune, problem, defect, trouble, defeat, calamity; desire, need, want; to be dead, deceased, or killed; to be extinguished; to be sick, ill, ailing, unwell, diseased; to be overcome, beaten, defeated, conquered, vanquished; be calmed down, decreased, diminished, subsided, abated; also used in expressions such as *hari mate* (mourning ceremony), *mate Pākehā* (foreign illness), *mate Māori* (Māori illness, psychosomatic illness due to *mākutū*, magic, or transgression of *tapu*), *mate whakamomori* (suicide), *hanga mate* (ill health), *mate urutā* (epidemic, deadly disease),¹ *mate atua* (death caused by the gods), *mate tauā* (death by war), *mate tara whare* (natural death), and many others, especially terms denoting different forms of illness and death.

According to Elsdon Best (1856–1931), whose primary sources of information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island, the Māori classified the causes of death into four categories: *mate atua* (death caused by the gods); *mate tauā* (death in war); *mate tara whare* or *mate aitu* (natural death); and death as a result of an accident or suicide.²

Traditional Māori belief encompassed an afterlife in a number of heavens and underworlds, although the details vary between tribes. There is also a considerable body of myth and legend about gods and heroes who descended into the underworld for various purposes.

Māori lore identifies various non-material aspects of a human being, some of which transcend death while others do not. Of these, three of considerable significance to everyday Māori life are the *wairua*, the *mauri*, and the *hau*.

Literally, *hau* means ‘breath’, ‘air’, or ‘wind’. It is the vital essence or principle of a person, place, or object. In a human being, it is subtle and intangible, having no location in any particular part or organ of the body. Even so, it has no existence independent of the body, and when the body dies, the *hau* is also extinguished. Sometimes, *hau* can also refer to material things, such as objects used in divination or sympathetic magic to represent some other person or thing.

Mauri is generally rendered by expressions such as ‘life force’ and ‘life principle’. Like *hau*, it is also applied to people, places and things, and is

intangible and ceases to exist when the body dies. The *mauri* also has a sacred aspect, the *mauri ora* (sacred life force), and it is this that is defiled, becoming *noa* (ordinary) when a person commits *hara* – the violation of something *tapu* (sacred, restricted). Like *hau*, however, a *mauri* can also be a material object, playing the part of a talisman that provides protection from harm. Those setting out on a journey, for instance, might go to a *tohunga* (priestly adept) to obtain a suitable *mauri* to protect them while travelling. In agriculture, a protective *mauri* may be placed in the fields to aid the growth of crops, perhaps in the form of a stone image of *Rongo*, the deity of agriculture, who also represents the moon.

The essential point in this context is that, in human beings, *mauri* and *hau* together refer to those subtle aspects of human life and existence that do not survive death. Among these aspects are personality, emotion, human mind, and other intangible facets of human life.

Wairua, the last of the three, is commonly translated as ‘spirit’, and is used in a wide range of contexts. It covers all aspects of a human being that are understood to survive bodily death. It is the ‘dream body’ or ‘astral body’ in which the individual is able to leave the body and experience other places, either consciously or in sleep. At death, it is the *wairua* that leaves the body, never to return. The *wairua* also descends to the underworld after death or ascends to the higher heavens. On the other hand, it is believed by some that the *wairua* can be destroyed by black magic.

Regarding the belief or understanding of an immortal or indestructible part of a human being, Elsdon Best observes that “Māori belief in the immortality of the soul is shown in his belief in two spirit worlds (the underworld and higher heavens), as also in that of spirit gods that are the souls of his ancestors.”³ In his *Maori Religion and Mythology*, Best explains at length:

The most remarkable feature of the Māori concept of the spirit world is that he had evolved a belief in two distinct realms in which spirits of the dead took up their final abode. Apparently the belief in the underworld of spirits was much the older one of the two, and knowledge of this realm was universal. As to the other home of departed spirits, the supernal realm known as the *Toi o ngā rangi* (summit of the heavens), which is the uppermost of the twelve heavens, knowledge of this heaven seems to have been less widely distributed.

Our own knowledge of this upper spirit world of the Māori was long confined to a few vague statements in early works, and these were not generally accepted by collectors of ethnographical data. During the past twenty years, however, we have collected a large amount of Māori manuscript matter written by natives from the dictation of old men forty-eight to sixty years ago, and here we find many references to the belief in the upper spirit world.

There is some evidence to show that this spirit world in the sky was the aristocratic realm of the two, for apparently it was not so widely known among the people as the underworld. This, however, is not borne out by a number of statements to the effect that the ultimate destination of spirits of the dead is an optional matter, and any spirit can make its home in either the underworld or sky world.

There is one marked difference between the accounts of these two spirit worlds, as given by natives. We have collected a number of myths and folk tales that illustrate very material views of spiritual life in the underworld, where spirits apparently regain material bodies, cultivate food products, manufacture garments, and even tattoo themselves. Now in no case have we gained any information as to life in the sky world; the only item of information gained is to the effect that each spirit reaching that realm gradually loses all memory of this world, its former home. . . . However, whatever may be the conditions of life in the two spirit worlds, it is well assured that the Māori took but little interest in either of them so long as he was a resident of the *ao mārama*, or world of life, whatever he may have done when he reached them.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.57

Best now considers Māori beliefs concerning the involvement of the spirits of the dead with this world:

With regard to life in the spirit world and the movements of the spirit after the death of its physical basis, there was much vagueness and no little confusion of beliefs. Evidently the Māori did not expend much thought on the conditions of existence in the spirit world. He was, however, most assiduous in placating divers gods and demons in order to enjoy life and welfare in this world. He himself tells us in no uncertain manner that, after the death of its physical basis, the human soul (*wairua*) fares on to the spirit world; also that, in many cases, a formula (*karakia*) was recited in order to expedite its passing to that realm.

Now the same informant may explain his reluctance to travel or pass a burial place at night by saying that he fears to encounter *kēhua* or *whakahaehae*, which, he will tell you, are ghosts, spirits of the dead. . . . The feeling seems to be that such fearsome apparitions are not abroad during the hours of daylight. How many times have I heard natives, when moving abroad at night, singing in the most lusty manner in order to scare the prowling *kēhua*; such nocturnal travellers appear to derive much comfort from these vocal efforts. The carrying of a torch also seems to give them confidence, and, in former times, the carrying of a piece of cooked food, ensured at least partial freedom from the terrors of the night.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.57–58

Best then makes an interesting comment concerning the ease with which an ethnographer can mistake a spurious opinion or comment for an established belief:

When questioned as to the contradictory nature of his evidence on this subject the Māori will explain matters by giving his own opinion thereof. If he has no opinion ready, then he will probably formulate one with dispatch. Now here we have, I believe, the origin of many irresponsible statements that have found a place in published accounts of Māori life, beliefs, *etc.* The opinion of an individual has been recorded and accepted as a general or widespread belief; a sporadic belief, custom or isolated usage has been looked upon as evidence of widespread belief or practice. There are numerous instances of such errors, and all of us who have written extensively on Māori topics have committed such errors.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.58

He goes on to consider Māori beliefs concerning the presence of spirits of the dead in this world:

As further proof of the presence of spirits of the dead in this world, the common belief in such manifestations of spirit forms as *tiramākā* and *parangēki* may be cited. The former term denotes companies of *wairua*, spirits of the dead, that are said to be occasionally seen roaming about in space. These are evidently purely spiritual forms, lacking all material qualities, inasmuch as I was always told that they can be seen only by *matatuhi* (or *matakite*), seers, and persons possessing the power of second sight. The presence of these ghostly beings was not considered desirable, any misfortune might follow such a visitation. Hence, whenever seers observed them hovering about they would at once proceed to banish them by means of certain rites. By these means the *aituā* or evil omen would be averted.

Some natives state that these *kāhui atua*, as the *tiramākā* are sometimes termed, come hither from the underworld in order to warn living relatives of some impending misfortune. Ever the Māori believed that the *wairua* of man is always striving to succour its physical basis during its life in this world; when that basis perishes, and the *wairua* takes up its abode in the underworld, its activities in that direction do not end, but it will continue to warn, assist, succour its living relatives in the world of life.

The *parangēki* are also spirits of human beings (*wairua tangata*), who seem to come from the underworld. These beings are heard in forests, usually at night apparently, and any unusual sound was attributed to *parangēki*.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.60

Life in the underworld differed markedly from life in the heavens, especially the twelfth heaven where *Io* the Parent, the supreme Being, is the essential presence. He is called the ‘Parent’ because he is the father of all things. In other places, He is also called the ‘Parentless’ because He is self-existent, the power beyond time and causation, created by none:

In the sky world to which spirits of the dead went, the *Toi o ngā rangi* or uppermost of the twelve heavens, all came under the sway of a beneficent deity, *Io* the Parent, and no antagonistic or evil being pertained to that realm.

In the underworld, we find a different state of things, for here abide two antagonistic powers that are ever striving against each other. . . . When *Hine-tītama*, the Dawn Maid, descended to the underworld she discarded that name and became known as *Hine-nui-te-Pō* (‘Maiden of the Great Darkness’). Her task in the underworld is to rescue the souls of her descendants, mankind, from the evil designs of *Whiro*, who ever attempts to destroy them. *Whiro* is the personified form of evil, darkness, and death; he and his myrmidons dwell within *Taiwhetuki*, the abode of death, and among them are the dread *maiki* brethren who represent sickness and disease. Ever these baleful beings attack man, the offspring of *Tāne* and *Hine-titarua* in the upper world, *taiao*, the world of light and life; ever man succumbs and flows like water down to the underworld; ever the brood of *Whiro* assails the souls of men in the lower world, striving to destroy them. But *Hine* of the red dawn ever stands between the souls of her children and the hordes of *Whiro*. In the days when man was young upon the earth, when she fled from *Tāne* the sun god to *Rarohenga*, the underworld, her abiding word was, “I will secure the spiritual welfare of our children.”

The popular conception of *Hine-nui-te-Pō* is that she is the destroyer who ensnares mankind in the snare of death; the higher teachings are that she is the defender of the endangered soul of man, the saviour of the multitude of spirits in the underworld. Here, then, in this underworld we have antagonistic forces, for *Hine* the empress of the lower world is aided by many beings known as the *tini o puihata* and the *parangēki*, while the followers of *Whiro* are known as the *tini o rohena* and *tini o potahi*.

Eldson Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.62–63

Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand’s South Island, also speaks of two after-death possibilities:

In the *Io* tradition, we are given the option of returning to *Io*. At first our soul comes from a lake named after *Tāne*. This lake has its origins in the domain of *Te Matua-kore* (the Parentless). This lake dwells in the *Pō* (‘Darkness’, ‘Void’) with *Io*, and so we understand that we

have the same origin as the sons of *Rangi* ('Sky Father') and *Papa* ('Earth Mother') tied to their root. After we leave this life, our essence leaves the body, and depending on the choices that it has made, it will go either to the lower *Pō* in the *Rēinga*, the place of the ancestors, or to the upper *Pō* to be with *Io*. There are many *Pō* and another series relates to the womb. Thus all things are interconnected because of the *Pō*. If you have made good choices which have brought good things, your *wairua* goes to the realm of rest and is welcomed by the twelve *mairekura* or female attendant beings, who wash and purify the soul. These attendants of *Io* take honoured people to the great *pā* (palace) of *Io* for a life where all things will be provided.

Te Rēinga is not hell as in the Christian theology. It is the place where all the ancestors rest; it is much like this world in that people still live like you and me, doing different things and behaving like any human. The Māori religion has no hell, no punishment after death. Such ideas were brought about by lesser religions to control people. The soul passes to *Te Rēinga* when one has lived an average life, and this is also a *Pō*. It is not a place for bad, but for all people to live together. Our ancestors are alive there, and we are welcomed by them. The greatest goal is to be welcomed in the upper *Pō* above the heavens. That is why we try to live in truth.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.280

Although often used as a general term for the spirit world, *Pō* appears in a number of Māori cosmogonic myths. While commonly understood as 'Night', 'Darkness' or 'Void', Best suggests that its wider meaning is the 'Unknown'. Several creation myths exist in which a sequence of *Pō* are mentioned as a part of the unfolding of creation from its source in *Io*.⁴

Like Robinson, Best observes that, unlike many other religious concepts concerning the after-death state, Māori beliefs include no element of punishment:

The Māori had evolved no belief in any punishment of the soul after death. Punishment for offences against the gods certainly lay in the hands of those gods, but such punishment was inflicted in this world and, moreover, it followed quickly upon the *hara* or wrong committed. It was his firm belief in this swift retribution in this world that caused the Māori to respect the laws of *tapu*, and so to induce a form of the discipline that he needed. Now it is clear that *Io* would have filled the place of a beneficent deity very well, and *Whiro* would have been equally at home in the place of our old friend Satan. But the Māori never advanced so far in his conception of spirit life; he was still in the intermediary stage when we broke in upon his solitude and gladly offered him a ready-made devil of highly truculent disposition.

In several systems of mythology, two spirit worlds pertaining to earth seem to be alluded to, one situated in the interior of the earth and the other in the far west. Quite possibly such beliefs resembled that of the Māori folk of these isles, where we are told that the underworld of spirits lies far within the body of the Earth Mother, also that spirits of the dead proceed to the far west under the setting of the sun. But we find that all spirits were believed so to pass to the far west in order to reach the old homeland of the race, from which place they proceeded to one of the two spirit worlds.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.64–65

Best goes on to observe that different Māori tribes and communities have different beliefs regarding the number of higher heavens, mentioning three, nine, ten, twelve, and twenty. The different accounts also exhibit many other variations:

My worthy old friend Hāmiora Pio of Ngāti-Awa (Bay of Plenty) knew nought of a celestial spirit world, yet I was told in the same district that *wairua* are denizens of the tenth or uppermost heaven. In no case did I ever hear a native of the Bay of Plenty district allude to twelve heavens; they all put the number at ten. The Tākitimu folk maintain that there are twelve. Pio remarked: “*Rangi* never said ‘Let my descendants ascend to me,’ for *Papa* had said: ‘Our children, let them return to me and abide within me. Although they have striven against us and parted us, yet are they still my children. Mine shall be the care of the dead.’”

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.87

Regarding the actual location of the underworld, Best reports:

The *Rēinga* or underworld was believed to be within or rather below the body of the Earth Mother, but spirits passed through or over the ocean in order to reach the underworld, one occupied by *Hine-nui-te-Pō* with her countless charges, the other by *Whiro* with his numerous followers. . . .

The common name of the underworld is the *Rēinga*, while the more correct and special name for it is *Rarohenga*. . . . *Tahekeroa* is alluded to as the path of death down to the *Pō*, to *Rarohenga*. The word *rēinga* denotes the time, place or circumstance of leaping, jumping, or descending. Properly speaking, *Te Rēinga* is the name of a place at the North Cape of New Zealand wherefrom spirits of the dead were believed to descend into the ocean on their way to the spirit world. It is therefore merely the starting place for the spirit world, but it has been accepted as the popular name for the underworld. . . .

The underworld is often alluded to as the *Pō*, a peculiar term that means 'night' but also carries the meaning of 'the unknown'.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.66, 68–69

According to a colourful Māori legend, the *wairua* reach the underworld by means of a *pōhutukawa* tree (one of three species of the genus *Metrosideros*), growing on the tip of Cape Rēinga, which is the northwestern end of the Aupōuri Peninsula of the North Island. When the *wairua* reaches the tree, it travels down a root into the ocean, and thence to the underworld beneath. Spirits Bay, which forms part of Cape Rēinga, is regarded as one of the most haunted places in New Zealand.

When death is imminent or has already taken place, the Māori custom is to perform soul-dispatching rites intended to speed the *wairua* on to its destination in order to help it pass over to the spirit world, and to prevent it from lingering around its recent material abode, causing distress to the living. For this reason, if the body of the recently deceased is not already with its family (*whānau*), it is returned to them as rapidly as possible. The family then attend a funeral (*tangihanga*) gathering (*marae*) at which the soul-dispatching rites are performed:

Having described the location and conditions of the two spirit worlds, so far as they are known, it now behoves us to explain how the spirit reaches the realm to which it is bound. . . .

As death drew near, the Māori partook of his final meal, the *ō matenga* or food for the journey of death, the last drink of water taken by him being known as the *wai o tanepi*. In his last moments, the breath is said to cause a slight movement of the nostrils as it passes from his body – as the Tahitians say, the *wairua* keeps fluttering about the lips during the pangs of death. White has left us a note to the effect that, among the Ngā Puhi folk, a charm (*karakia*, incantation) termed a *whakaheke* was repeated over the dead in order to facilitate the descent of the soul to the spirit world.⁵ Taylor stated that a charm called a *whakaheke* was employed in order to enable the spirit to ascend to the heavens.⁶ Shortland, in his *Maori Religion and Mythology*,⁷ gives a charm to enable the *wairua* to reach the heavens. The object of this ceremony was to dispatch the soul to the spirit world, to dispose of it, lest it remain about its former abode and so distress the living. In some districts the act is called *tuku wairua* or soul dispatching, and in others *wehe* (to separate). Some natives state that spirits of the dead remain about their old homes until the *karakia wehe* has been recited over the dead. A charm styled *tuku* was repeated by the Moriori folk over their dead.

When the *wehe* charm was recited over the dead, the parents or other near relatives might chant a brief farewell to the dead. The following is a specimen of such farewells:

Farewell, O my son!
Grieve not, weep not;
Give not way to affection and yearning forever.
Fare you well, depart forever.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.82–83

See also: **tuku wairua**.

1. See “mate,” *Māori Dictionary, AMEI*.
2. Elsdon Best, “Maori Medical Lore,” *MMLI* p.214.
3. Elsdon Best, *Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB* p.7.
4. Elsdon Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM1* pp.58–59.
5. Best leaves this observation unreferenced, and a diligent search has failed to find it among Taylor’s voluminous writings.
6. Richard Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui, IMNZ* p.220 (n.*).
7. Edward Shortland, *Maori Religion and Mythology, MRMS* pp.44–45.

mawt (A/P), **marg** (P) *Lit.* death; the departure of the soul or spirit from the body, following which the body is said to be dead; metaphorically, to give up attachment to the things of this world and to become conscious of the higher spiritual realms:

In *ṣūfī* terminology, death (*marg*) means to leave worldly pleasures, worldly faces and worldly attachments, and to become attentive to the higher spiritual world. One joins with the light and subtle mysteries of existence inside, and is annihilated in God, His Names, and His Attributes.

Ja’far Sajjādī, Farhang-i Lughāt va-Iṣṭilāḥāt va-Ta’bīrāt-i ‘Irfānī, FLI p.714

According to the *Qur’ān*, God is the author of both life and death:¹

To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:
It is He who gives life and death (*yumūta*),
and He has power over all things.

Qur’ān 57:2, AYA

In Sufism, death implies the annihilation of the individual self or ego (*naḥs*). One who dies to the *naḥs* comes alive through contact with the Spirit of God.²

Annihilation of the self and complete subsistence in God has been called spiritual death (*mawt al-ma'nawī*).³ It has been said with good reason that it is easier to die physically than to die to the self.⁴

The death of the *nafs* happens when the soul and mind have been temporarily withdrawn from the physical body during spiritual practice. This is known as *mawt ikhtiyārī* (voluntary death, dying while living), as opposed to *mawt idḡirārī* (forced death, natural death). Al-Jīlānī describes the death of true mystics ("the elite"):

Death (*mawt*) for the elite (*khawāṣṣ*) means dying to the entire creation, dying to self-will (*irādah*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*). When someone has truly experienced such a death (*mawt*), he attains to the life everlasting (*al-ḥayāt al-abadīyah*) in the company of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). His outer death will be but a momentary stroke, a momentary faint, a momentary daze, a nodding off to sleep, and then an awakening. If you wish for such a death, you must take the remedy of gnosis (*ma'rifah*, mystical realization), ... until the hand of mercy and grace takes hold of you and revives you to an eternal life.

Al-Jīlānī, al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī 47, FRQJ p.172; cf. SRCD p.279

Sufis have also described living in the darkness of this world as death, since it entails being veiled from the vision of the inner worlds and of God Himself, the true source of life energy.⁵ They have also categorized death in other ways:

Shiblī said, "Death (*mawt*) is of three kinds: that in the world, that in the hereafter, and that in God. Now, he who dies in love of the world dies a hypocrite; he who dies in love of the hereafter dies an ascetic; and he who dies in love of God dies a mystic (*'ūrīf*)."

Shāh Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV1 p.185; cf. in SSE5 p.171

Death (*marg*) is of three kinds: cursed, remorseful, and blessed. A cursed death (*marg*) is that of infidels, a remorseful death (*marg*) is that of wrongdoers, and the blessed death (*marg*) is that of the pious (*muttaqī*).

Pīr-i Ṭarīqat, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 p.129, in SSE5 p.172

Sufis, as lovers of symbolism and systematization, have also described death in different colours. There is red death (*mawt-i aḥmar*), which Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Lāhijī and al-Qāshānī describe as "the battle against the *nafs*" or "thwarting the *nafs*".⁶

There is green death (*mawt al-akhḡar*), which is depicted as a Sufi's contentment with an old patched cloak (*muraqqa'*), being careful not to desire more.⁷

There is white death (*mawt al-abyaḡ*), which is the death of the *nafs* brought about by fasting and hunger, and is so named because it illuminates the inward

and “brightens the face of the heart”. In this state, a person’s native intelligence and wisdom are restored, and he awakens from the sleep of negligence.⁸

There is also black death (*mawt al-aswad*), which is complete forbearance of the insults and injuries of others, without taking any offence, but rather finding pleasure in it, an attitude that arises from seeing the Beloved in everything, even in the *nafs* of others.⁹

Anṣārī categorizes the various forms of death that a soul can experience. Of these, it is death of the “prophets and saints” that is the most rewarding, for they have inner vision of the Divine. But for those who seek the Divine during their lifetime, death is also a good experience, with nothing to fear:

Death (*marg*) is of four kinds: death with curse (*marg-i la’nat*), which is the death (*marg*) of the blasphemer; death with regret (*marg-i ḥasrat*), which is the death (*marg*) of the disobedient; death (*marg*) with beneficence (*marg-i karāmat*), which is the death of the believer (*marg-i mu’minān*); and death (*marg*) with divine visions (*marg-i mushāhadat*), which is the death (*marg*) of the prophets and saints.

According to the Prophet Muḥammad, “Death (*mawt*) is a gift to the believer.” Death (*marg*) is a boon to the lover (*dūst*) because his mind, which is the veil between himself and God, is removed. For the lover (*dūst*) of the Lord, there is no treasure or gift equal to having the way to the Friend opened:

Be not afraid of the death (*marg*) of this face,
be afraid of the life you lead in it.
No true living will spring from this life:
it is a wolf that cannot become a shepherd.

The world is like a veil, and the time to see divine visions is resurrection (*qiyāmat*). For lovers (*dūstān*), the veil is a misfortune and vision is a blessing. He asks, “When will I become free of this veil and have union with the Friend (*Dūst*)?”

Anṣārī, in *Kashf al-Asrār*, KA4 pp.71–73

Al-Ḥallāj speaks of the death of the various inner aspects of a human being, each at a successively higher level or “station (*maqām*)”:

Death of the *nafs* (lower mind) is at the station (*maqām*) of fear; that of the intellect (*‘aql*) at the station (*maqām*) of majesty; that of the spirit (*rūḥ*) on beholding (*ru’yah*) the Eternal, although, in fact, this death (*mawt*) is really life. “They live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.”¹⁰

Al-Ḥallāj, in *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* 6:11, MARB p.117; cf. in SSE5 p.170

The Quranic quote, which al-Ḥallāj interprets as representing a spiritual struggle, comes from a militant passage in the *Qur'ān*, concerning the recent battle of Uḥud, in which the Muslims had suffered a heavy defeat, but which was followed by the Battle of Badr, in which the Muslims prevailed. The fuller context, which provides an insight into the basis of the Muslim attitude towards death in “the cause of *Allāh*”, reads:

When disaster struck, although you had previously inflicted losses twice as great, you exclaimed, “Whose fault was that?” Say: “It was your own fault. *Allāh* has power over all things.” What you suffered on the day the two armies met was by permission of *Allāh*, so that He might know the true believers from the hypocrites.

Some, when they were told, “Come, fight for the cause of *Allāh* and defend yourselves,” answered: “If we knew anything about fighting, we would come with you.” On that day, they were nearer unbelief than faith. What they said with their lips was not in their hearts. But *Allāh* is aware of their secret thoughts.

They who, while they sat at home, said of their brothers, “If they had been guided by us they would not have been killed” – say to them, “Avoid death (*mawt*) yourselves, then, if you know so much.”

Think not of those who were killed in the cause of *Allāh* as dead. They live, finding their sustenance in the Lord. They rejoice in the bounty of *Allāh*, that those who are yet to join them have nothing to fear, nor any cause to grieve. They glory in the grace and bounty of *Allāh*. God will not withhold the reward of the faithful.

As for those who answered the call of *Allāh* and His Messenger even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong, will be richly rewarded. When they were told, “The people have mustered a great army against you,” it only increased their faith, and they replied, “*Allāh*’s help is sufficient for us. He is the best protector.” So they earned the grace and bounty of *Allāh*, and no harm befell them. For they had striven to please *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is of infinite bounty.

It is only the Evil One (*Shayṭān*) that makes men fear his followers. But fear them not. Fear me, if you are true believers.

Qur'ān 3:165–75; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

The exhortation to die in holy war because *Allāh* will reward the faithful in paradise is a common refrain in both the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*. Even so, Sufis and mystics of all traditions have commonly pointed out that it is inner purity of mind for which the soul is striving, and which leads a soul to paradise; and that the real ‘holy war (*jihād*)’ is the battle against the lower mind.

The death of which the Sufis speak, which truly leads a soul into the presence of God, is the death or annihilation of the ego. This is a death

that can be experienced before physical death. But since it requires and is accompanied by the temporary withdrawal of the soul and mind from the physical body, it is also an experience of physical death while still living in the material world:

Death (*marg*) without dying is legitimate for us: ...
 it is death (*marg*) outwardly, but life inwardly.
 When you find life eternal, death disappears.

Rūmī, Mašnavī I:3927–28; cf. MJR2 p.212

Rūmī also points out that for most people death has become a source of fear, because they fear that they are losing something of value. Only at the time of death does the reality become known:

The worldly man is destitute, yet terrified:
 he possesses nothing, yet he dreads thieves.
 Bare he came and naked he goes, and all the while
 his heart is bleeding with anxiety on account of the thief.
 At the hour of death (*marg*),
 when a hundred lamentations are being made beside him,
 his spirit (*jān*) begins to laugh at its own fear.
 At that moment, the rich man knows that he has no gold;
 The keen-witted man, too, knows that he is devoid of talent.

Rūmī, Mašnavī III:2632–35; cf. MJR4 p.147

The basis of the fear of death is fear of oneself, an unconscious fear that death will be a time of accounting:

What makes you flee death (*marg*) in fear is really fear of yourself.
 Take heed, dear soul!
 It is your own ugly face, not the face of death (*marg*).
 Your spirit is like a tree, and death (*marg*) like a leaf.
 It has grown from you, whether it is good or evil:
 every hidden thought of yours, fair or foul, is born of yourself.
 If you are wounded by a thorn, you yourself have sown it;
 If you are clad in satin and silk, you yourself spun it.

Rūmī, Mašnavī III:3441–44; cf. MJR4 p.193

In reality, far from being something to fear, death – if preceded by a human life lived in a truly spiritual manner – provides an entry into a broader dimension of life. It is a “provision” for the spirit, for the soul devoid of the body is more truly alive:

Why have you given the name death (*marg*)
 to what is really provision?
 Observe the sorcery that has caused
 the provision (*barg*) to seem to you as death (*marg*).

Rūmī, Mašnavī VI:1378, MJR6 p.335

Therefore, Rūmī counsels:

You are such that without this body,
 you have a body;
 Do not, then, fear the going forth of the soul from the body.

Rūmī, Mašnavī III:1613; cf. MJR4 p.91

Those who have truly realized during life that death is a transition to a more spiritual existence welcome death as a release from prison:

For those to whom death (*ajal*) is as sugar –
 how can their sight be dazzled by worldly fortunes?
 Bodily death (*marg-i tan*) is not bitter to them,
 since they go from a dungeon and prison into a garden.
 They have been delivered from the world of torment:
 no one weeps for the loss of what is nothing, nothing.

Rūmī, Mašnavī V:1712–14; cf. MJR6 pp.103–4

This is why one of Rūmī's characters maintains that no plot to murder him can be a reason for fear:

Death (*marg*) has become as sweet as *manna* to me: ...
 I am the spirit's master, not the body's slave.
 This body has no value in my sight:
 without my body I am the noble spirit, son of the noble One.
 Dagger and sword have become my sweet basil:
 my death (*marg*) has become my banquet and my flower garden.

Rūmī, Mašnavī I:3926, 3942–44; cf. MJR2 pp.212–13

Indeed, though content in the divine will, the mystic longs for death and for the meeting with the divine beloved within:

My death (*marg*) is life:
 when I escape this life, it is to live forever. ...
 O you of radiant cheek, O eternal spirit,
 draw my spirit to yourself
 and generously grant me that meeting with you.

Rūmī, Mašnavī III:3838, 3840; cf. MJR4 p.215

Everyone in this world is a prisoner of the body, except for the genuine mystic:

How can a prisoner in captivity
 release another imprisoned man?
 All the people of this world are prisoners
 in expectation of death (*marg*)
 in the abode that is passing away;
 Except, to be sure, in the rare case of one
 who is single, one whose body is in the prison,
 and his spirit like Saturn (in the seventh heaven).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:3403–5; cf. MJR6 p.446

Such a mystic is an incarnation of the divine creative power – the divine Word, the true food of the soul, the light of God, and the Fountain of Life that delivers souls from the bodily prison:

I am the Word of God (*kalām-i Ḥaqq*),
 subsistent through the divine Essence;
 I am the food of the Soul of the soul,
 the hyacinth of purity.
 I am the sunlight that has fallen upon you,
 but I have not become separate from the (divine) Sun.
 Lo, I am the Fountain of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*),
 that I may deliver the lovers of God from death (*mamāt*).
 If your greed had not raised such a stench,
 God would have poured a draught of that Water
 upon your graves.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:4287–90; cf. MJR4 p.240

Despite what mystics may say, for the majority of people, death is a frightening subject, full of the unknown and shrouded in a sense of dread. And though it has often been called the only certain event of life, few people ever care to think of it or plan for it. Mystics, on the other hand, develop a totally different perspective. To them, it is a well-trodden path, an experience they have frequently enjoyed during meditation, and they welcome final physical death as an experience of great happiness:

There are those to whom death
 is as a draught of pure water to the thirsty.

Ibn al-ʿArif, Maḥāsin al-Majālis, MMAS, in CEI p.96

They see life as sleeping or dreaming, and death as an awakening, as in a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet:

When we live, we sleep;
When we die, we wake.

Ḥadīth, in “dhikr,” CEI p.98

While some Sufis have used the term *mawt ikhtiyārī* (voluntary death) to distinguish the mystical death from physical death, and some have spoken of *fanāʾ* (annihilation) or *miʾrāj al-qalb* (ascension of the heart) to describe the same process, other Sufis have simply stated that there is another kind of death:

You must realize that there is a type of death (*marg*) above and beyond physical death (*marg-i qālib*) and another type of life beyond that of the corporeal and physical frame. . . . In yonder world, all is life within life, whereas in this world all is death (*mawt*) within death (*mawt*). Until you transcend death (*mawt*), you will never attain life.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, Tamhīdāt 418, TQH pp.319–20, in HSL1 p.334

Rūmī reflects on the many ways that physical death can come:

Since the causes of mortality are infinite,
which road, then, shall we bar (to death)?
A hundred windows and doors
facing mordant death (*marg-i ladīgh*)
are ever creaking as they are opened.
But from greed for worldly provision,
the ear of the covetous does not hear
the harsh creaking of these doors of death (*marg*).
From the body’s viewpoint,
pains are the noise of the door;
From an enemy’s viewpoint,
maltreatment is the noise of the door.

Dear soul, read for one moment
the table of contents in books on medicine;
Look at the flaming fire of diseases!
Through all those maladies, there is a way (for death)
to enter this house:
At every other step there is a pit full of scorpions!

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3102–7; cf. MJR4 p.443

Rūmī observes that the body in itself has no life. It is the spirit of man, as a “pure draught” of the divine Beauty, that makes the body alive:

When at the hour of death (*marg*) that pure draught
 is separated from the bodily clod by dying,
 you quickly bury that which remains,
 since it had been made such an ugly thing by that (separation).
 When the spirit displays its beauty without this carcass,
 I cannot express the loveliness of that union.
 When the moon displays its radiance without this cloud,
 it is impossible to describe that glory and majesty.

Rūmī, Mašnavī V:383–86; cf. MJR6 p.25

The purpose of life is in death, he maintains. Without death, life would be purposeless. Without death, life would be like a stack of gathered crops that has been left untended:

A simpleton remarked, “The world would be delightful,
 were it not for the intervention of death (*marg*).”
 Another rejoined, “If there were no death (*marg*),
 this tangled world would not be worth a straw.
 It would be like a stack heaped up in a field,
 neglected, and left unthreshed.
 You have supposed what is really death (*marg*) to be life:
 you have sown your seed in barren soil.
 The intellect (*‘aql*), indeed, sees the reverse of the truth:
 it sees life as death (*marg*), O man of weak judgment.”

O God, show us everything in this house of illusion
 as it really is.
 No one who has died is filled with grief
 merely on account of death (*marg*);
 His grief is caused by having made too little provision
 for the life hereafter;
 Otherwise, he would not grieve,
 for he has come from a dungeon into open country,
 amidst fortune and pleasure and delight.
 From this place of mourning
 and this narrow vale of tribulation,¹¹
 he has been transported to that spacious plain –
 That is the seat of Truth, it is not a palace of falsehood:
 a choice wine, not an intoxication with buttermilk –
 That is the seat of Truth, and God is beside him:
 he is delivered from the water and earth of this temple of fire.

Rūmī, Mašnavī V:1760–70; cf. MJR6 pp.106–7

Complete control over the process of death is therefore one of the goals of spiritual practice. For this reason, it is often called a rehearsal or practice for death:

A well-known story is told of a certain spiritual master (*pīr*) that he used to visit an *imām* who was engrossed in maintaining his dignity and was a prey to self-conceit. The master used to say to the *imām*: “O So-and-so, you must die.” This would offend the *imām*, for “Why,” he thought, “should this beggar be always repeating these words to me?”

So the next day, when the spiritual master came in, the *imām* said to him: “O So-and-so, you must die.” At this, the master put down his prayer rug, spread it out, and laying his head upon it, exclaimed, “I am dead” – and immediately yielded up his soul. The *imām* took heed, realizing that this spiritual master had been bidding him prepare for death (*marg*), as he himself had done.

Hujwūrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXIII, KMM pp.461–62; cf. KM p.354

Death is the soul’s escape from the body, and this can take place either at physical death, or before it. Using a common metaphor, Rūmī likens the soul to a bird in the cage of the body. The cage is located in the midst of a beautiful garden, so that the bird longs to leave the cage, since it feels surrounded by great beauty and a wonderful joy. The bird enjoys the sweet music of a multitude of birds singing of freedom, a lovely image of the divine Music heard within. But not so the bird that is overwhelmed by anxieties, like a caged bird surrounded by hungry cats. Such a soul fears death and the inevitable separation from its material attachments. It would rather be imprisoned in a “hundred cages”:

Death (*marg*) and migration from this earthly abode
 has become as sweet to me
 as if leaving the cage and flying to the captive bird –
 The cage that is in the very midst of the garden,
 so that the bird beholds the rose beds and the trees,
 while outside, around the cage, a multitude of birds
 is sweetly chanting tales of liberty –
 On seeing that verdant place
 neither desire for food remains to the bird in the cage,
 nor patience and rest.
 It sticks its head out through every hole
 that perchance it may tear this fetter from its leg.
 Since its heart and soul are already outside like this,
 what will it feel like when you open the cage?

Not such is the bird caged amidst anxieties –
 cats round about it in a ring:

How, in this dread and sorrow,
 should it have the desire to leave the cage?
 It wishes that to save itself
 from this unwelcome plucking of its feathers,
 there might be a hundred cages round about this cage
 in which it is confined.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:3951–59; cf. MJR4 pp.221–22

Physical death is generally understood in most religious and spiritual traditions to be a time of accounting for the way in which life has been lived. The *Qurʾān* says that the time of death is fixed and that everyone then receives a just reward.¹²

No soul can die, save by leave of God:
 the term of every life is fixed.
 Whoever desires the rewards of this world,
 We shall give it to him;
 And whoever desires the rewards of the other world,
 We shall give him of that also;
 And we shall surely recompense the grateful.

Qurʾān 3:145; cf. AYA, KPA

The Sufis, like all other mystics, emphasize the importance of remembering the relentless approach of death. As Rūmī points out, if life is passed in chasing “phantoms”, at the time of death, there will be a “hundred regrets for having missed the opportunity” of making spiritual progress:

Those who have passed away do not grieve on account of death
 (*mawt*); their only regret is to have missed the opportunities.

That captain of mankind has truly said
 that no one who has passed away from this world
 feels sorrow and regret and disappointment
 on account of death (*mawt*).
 Nay, he feels a hundred regrets
 for having missed the opportunity, saying,
 “Why did not I make death (*marg*) my object –
 that death which is the storehouse
 of every fortune and every provision –
 Why, through seeing double,
 did I make the lifelong object of my attention
 those phantoms that vanished at the fated hour?”

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:1450 (heading), 1450–53; cf. MJR6 p.339

Quoting the Prophet, he observes that no one is unhappy because of death itself:

The wise Prophet has said that no one who dies
and dismounts from (the steed of) the body
feels grief on account of departure and death (*mawt*),
but only grieves because of having failed
and missed his opportunities.

Truly, everyone that dies wishes
that the departure to his destination had been earlier:
If he be wicked, in order that his wickedness might have been less;
If devout, in order that he might have gone home sooner.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:604–7; cf. MJR6 p.39

In another passage, Rūmī says that there is a treasure hidden within the human body. If you wait until death, the house of the body will of itself collapse. Then you will see that there was a treasure in it, but will no longer be able to claim it. Only by “demolishing” the house of the human body while living, that is, by undergoing what the Sufis call *mawt ikhtiyārī* (mystical death, voluntary death, death at will), can the treasure be obtained:

In the end, this house will of itself fall into ruin,
and the treasure beneath it will certainly be uncovered;
But the treasure will not be yours,
for the spirit receives that gift
as the wages of demolishing the house.
When it has not done that work, its wages are nothing:
“There is nothing for man hereafter,
but recompense for that which he wrought here.”¹³

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:2543–45; cf. MJR4 p.412

The physical body is one of the veils separating the soul from the Divine. Yet separation from and yearning for the divine Beloved are necessary steps on the ladder to divine union, for it is this yearning that eradicates the last traces of the individual self. Al-Ḥallāj and others have called this the lover’s death (*mawt al-‘āshiq*).¹⁴ Consequently, though remaining content in the divine will, they actually long for death, for this will bring them closer to the Beloved. Hujwīrī relates:

It is recounted that whenever Sufyān Thawrī was asked by a traveller if he had any messages for anyone, he would reply, “If you come across Death (*Marg*), give him my regards and say:

If you want my life, just ask,
and I shall send it without delay.

When Bilāl Ḥabashī was on his deathbed, his wife cried out, “Alas! Woe is me!” Bilāl replied, “Do not say that! Instead you should say, ‘How happy! For tomorrow I meet my Beloved.’”

Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār 1, KAI p.301; cf. in SSE5 p.175

This yearning does not manifest in the devotee’s heart without considerable spiritual effort, part of which is the spiritual practice of *dhikr* (repetition, remembrance). Al-Ghazālī describes how *dhikr* also prepares a person for death by separating the mind from all that is not God:

When a man becomes familiar with *dhikr*, he separates himself (inwardly) from all other things. Now, at death he is separated from all that is not God. . . . What remains is the invocation alone. If this invocation is familiar to him, he finds his pleasure in it and rejoices that the obstacles which kept him from it have been removed; so that he finds himself alone with his Beloved. ‘Alī said: “It is astonishing that anyone, seeing his familiar die, should forget death.”

Al-Ghazālī (Unsourced), in IDIB p.106, TTWP p.1023

Holy men and devotees are often aware of the time of their death, especially as it approaches. Al-Ghazālī died on Monday the 14th of *Jumādā* II, 505 AH (1111 CE), at the age of fifty-three. His brother Aḥmad relates that at dawn on the day of his death al-Ghazālī performed his ablutions, prayed, and then said: “Bring me my shroud,” and taking it, he kissed it and laid it over his eyes and said: “Most gladly do I enter into the presence of the King.” Then he stretched out his feet and went forth to meet Him, and so passed into the paradise of God, “worthy of all honour, of loftier station than the stars, giving more guidance to men than the full moon when darkness has fallen”.¹⁵

According to another story, when al-Ghazālī felt his death approaching, he dismissed those who were with him, with instructions that no one should come to see him until the following morning. The next day, when they entered his chamber, they found him clad in his shroud, facing the *qiblah*, dead. At his head, they found a sheet of paper with these lines:

Say to my friends, when they look upon me, dead,
weeping for me and mourning me in sorrow:
“Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself.”
In the name of God, I tell you, it is not I.

I am a spirit, and this is naught but flesh:
it was my abode and my garment for a time.
I am a treasure, by a talisman kept hid,
fashioned of dust, which served me as a shrine;

I am a pearl, which has left its shed deserted:
 it was my prison, where I spent my time in grief,
 whence I have now flown forth, and it is left as a token.

Praise be to God, who has now set me free,
 and prepared for me my place in the highest of the heavens.
 Until today I was dead, though alive in your midst:
 now I live in truth, with the grave clothes discarded.
 Today I hold converse with the saints above:
 now, with no veil between, I see God face to face.
 I look upon the Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*), and therein I read,
 whatever was and is, and all that is to be.

Let my house fall in ruins, lay my cage in the ground,
 cast away the talisman, 'tis a token, no more;
 Lay aside my cloak, it was but my outer garment:
 place them all in the grave, let them be forgotten.
 I have passed on my way, and you are left behind:
 your place of abode was no dwelling place for me.

Think not that death is death, nay, it is life:
 a life that surpasses all that we could dream of here,
 while in this world.
 Here we are granted sleep:
 death is but sleep, sleep that shall be prolonged.
 Be not frightened when death draws nigh:
 it is but the departure for this blessed home.
 Think of the mercy and love of your Lord:
 give thanks for His grace, and come without fear.

What I am now, even so shall you be,
 for I know that you are even as I am.
 The souls of all men came forth from God;
 The bodies of all are compounded alike –
 good and evil, alike it was ours.
 I give you now a message of good cheer:
 May God's peace and joy be yours for evermore.

Al-Ghazālī, in Iḥāf al-Sāda, ISMM p.43; cf. in GMS pp.36–37

These poignant verses express the feelings of mystics and the spiritually minded of all times. As Rūmī writes:

Die (*mīr*) now, die now, in this love die:
 having died (*murd*) in this love, you will all receive new life.

Die now, die now, and do not fear this death (*marg*):
 for you will emerge from this earth and seize the heavens.
 Die now, die now – break free from this mind (*nafs*):
 for this mind (*nafs*) is a chain, and you its prisoner.
 Take an axe to dig out the prison:
 when you have broken out of prison, you will be kings and princes.
 Die now, die now before the beautiful King:
 when you have died (*murd*) before the King,
 you will all be kings and renowned.
 Die now, die now, and escape from this cloud:
 having escaped from this cloud, you will all be radiant full moons.
 Be silent, be silent – silence is the sign of death (*marg*):
 it is because of life here that you are fleeing from the Silent One.
Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 636:6628–34, KSD2 p.58; cf. MP1 (80:1–7) p.70

In another verse, he describes the joyous death of the lover of the Divine:

Lovers (*‘āshiqān*) die, fully conscious of their dying,
 but it is before a Beloved full of sweetness that they die.
 On the Day of *Alast*, they drank the Water of Life,
 so they can die no other way.
 Since they are part of the army of lovers,
 they do not leave this life like ordinary people.
 Through God’s mercy, they are far beyond the dignity of angels,
 far be it from them to die like humans!

Do you suppose that lions die like dogs,
 outside the house (far from His presence)?
 When lovers die in their journey,
 the King of the soul runs out to meet them.
 If they die at the feet of that moon,
 they all shine like the sun.

The lovers, who are each other’s soul,
 die for the sake of each other.
 Love cools their aching hearts,
 yet they die from that heartache.
 They are like the pearl beyond compare;
 They die like orphans, without father or mother,
 (they are detached from their relatives).

Lovers fly to the heavenly spheres,
 while deniers die in the depths of hell.

Lovers open the eye that sees the Unseen,
 while others die blind and deaf.
 Those who, because they feared God,
 slept not at night (sat in meditation),
 die without dread and without danger.
 Those who, like cows, worshipped fodder here in this world,
 die like asses.
 Those who seek that glance today
 die with that glance full of joy and laughter resting on them.
 The King places them next to His mercy,
 they do not die in lowliness and contempt.
 Far from them is the annihilation of death (*marg*)!
 If I say that they die, it is only a figure of speech.

Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 972:10285–302, *KSD2* pp.236–37;

cf. OMDR pp.278–79, in *SPL* p.218

See also: **jihād** (8.4), **mawt ikhtiyārī**, **mūtū qabla an tamūtū**.

1. See also *Qur'ān* 2:258, 3:156, 7:158, 23:80, 40:68, 50:43.
2. Jurjānī, *Ta'rīfāt*, *KTJ* p.212, in *SSE5* p.170.
3. Su'ād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī* 588, *AMAS* p.1033, in *SSE5* p.173.
4. Yahyā ibn Mu'adh, in *Risālah*, *RQQQ* p.17, in *SSE5* p.176.
5. Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, *KIFT4* p.107, in *SSE5* p.170.
6. Lāhijī, *Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz*, *SGR* p.503; al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 235, *GSTA* p.71; Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, *Rasā'il*, *RNV4* p.77, in *SSE5* p.172.
7. Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 237, *GSTA* p.72; Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, *Rasā'il*, *RNV4* p.77, in *SSE5* p.172.
8. Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 236, *GSTA* p.72; Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, *Rasā'il*, *RNV4* p.77, in *SSE5* p.173.
9. Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 238, *GSTA* p.73; Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, *Rasā'il*, *RNV4* p.78, in *SSE5* pp.173–74.
10. *Qur'ān* 3:169.
11. *Lit.* “the place where camels are made to kneel.”
12. See also *Qur'ān* 7:34, 10:49, 29:5.
13. *Qur'ān* 53:39.
14. Rūzbihān, *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* 7:29, *MARB* p.139, in *SSE5* p.174.
15. Al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyah* 2:443, *KDT2* p.86, *KDRM* fol.195a, in *GMS* pp.35–36.

mawt iḍṭirārī (A), **mawt izṭirārī** (P) *Lit.* compulsory (*iḍṭirārī*) death (*mawt*); forced death, necessary death; natural death. See **mawt**.

mawt ikhtiyārī (A/P), **mawt al-irādī** (A), **mawt-i irādī** (P) *Lit.* death (*mawt*) by free choice (*ikhtiyārī*, *irādī*); death by free will, voluntary death, optional death; mystical death; annihilation of the lower self with all its passions and imperfections, and the complete withdrawal of the spirit from the body; a Sufi term for dying while living; sometimes translated as ‘noble death’, because it is the crowning achievement of human life, a prelude to the attainment of spiritual heights, and necessary to the realization of the true self.

In *mawt ikhtiyārī*, the soul or spirit passes through the same experience as in natural death (*mawt idtirārī*), and begins to perceive and function in the inner realms. Perhaps it is this process that is referred to in a somewhat obscure verse in the *Qur’ān*:

Our Lord! Twice have You made us die,
and twice have You made us live.

Qur’ān 40:11; cf. MGK

A number of Sufis have described *mawt ikhtiyārī*. Nasafī alludes to a saying attributed to the Prophet, “Die before you die (*mūtū qabla an tamūtū*)”:

Know that saints and prophets have a death (*mawt*) before their natural death (*mawt-i ṭabīʿī*) occurs, because they die a death by choice (*mawt-i irādī*). Whatever others see after their natural death (*mawt-i ṭabīʿī*), saints and prophets see before their own natural death (*mawt-i ṭabīʿī*). All the states of death (*marg*) and beyond is clear to them. They reach the level of certitude through seeing (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*), rather than certitude through knowledge (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*).

For a human being, the body (*jism*) is a veil (*ḥijāb*); once the soul has left the body, nothing can be its veil. O *darvīsh*, know that to perceive the after-death (*baʿd az marg*) state is a great accomplishment for a wayfarer; but people are unmindful and ignorant of this reality. Were they not, they would make an effort night and day so that the after-death (*baʿd az marg*) state would be revealed to them, and the level to which they will go after leaving their bodies will be revealed to them.

Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 6:4.15, 17, IK pp.107–8

He says that such people have a unique relationship with the Divine:

Know that they say there is a group (*qawm*) for whom God grants all wishes: anything they desire is provided for them. To whatever they direct their ambition, it will be as their ambition desires. This means that their knowledge, their power, and their ambitions are perfected; and anything they want, it will be so. This is because they have experienced death by choice (*mawt-i irādī*) before their natural death (*mawt-i ṭabīʿī*) takes place.

They have transcended the world and entered the hereafter. If these people want it to rain, as soon as the thought crosses their mind, clouds appear, and it starts to rain. If they want the rain to stop, at that very moment, the rain stops, and the clouds disappear. If they want a sick person to be healed, he is instantaneously healthy and sound. And, in all other matters, know that it is the same. Again, they say that if these people wish, they can walk on the water, fly in the air, pass through fire, or go from east to west in the matter of one hour, and their food will be provided for them without any effort.

Nasafi, al-Insān al-Kāmil 22:6.24, IK p.307

In Shabistarī's classification, *mawt ikhtiyārī* is the third kind of death:

There are three kinds of death (*mamāt*). The first is by nature (*ẓātī*), and is happening every second; the second is by force (*iẓtirārī*); and the third is death by choice (*ikhtiyārī*). . . . Nobody in the world can practise this kind of death (*marg*) except you (a human being). . . .

When you become free of the cloak of the body, all your good and bad qualities will be apparent. Your body will become clear as the water in which one can see one's face. In that world and existence, your nature will sometimes be like light and sometimes like fire. There will no longer be a hierarchy of high or low, and you will die no more. Your whole body will be like the heart, and your human existence will be pure and clean, free from the dirt of the body. Without reason, the light of God will be manifested, and out of joy, you will be intoxicated. . . . Such a wealth! Such a delight!

Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz 651–52, 654, 683–92, 696, GRS pp.88, 90–91

Just as life itself is punctuated by pain, physical and mental, dying while living is also painful, says Rūmī, for it requires the death of the *nafs*, the lower mind and ego, which do not relinquish their hold without a struggle. He describes the *nafs* as a fire that is extinguished with the help of the *shaykh*, the master. But the process feels painful. In its death throes, when the secret activity of the ego is illuminated and laid bare by the "light" of the master, the ego "sizzles and splatters". The individual feels uncomfortable when he sees how his inner mind is functioning; but the master's intention is that the ego should not burn or spoil the "rose garden" of spirituality and the spiritual effort of the seeker:

Fire flees from water because water puts it out.
 Your senses and thoughts are wholly fire,
 but the senses and thoughts of the *shaykh* are sweet light.
 When the water of his light drips upon your fire,
 it sizzles and leaps up.

As it sizzles and splatters, you call it death (*marg*) and pain –
 until this hell of your self (*naḥs*) becomes cold,
 so that it may not burn your rose garden,
 so that it may not burn your goodness and your good deeds.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II: 1255–59; cf. MJR2 p.286

See also: **dying while living, jīte jī marnā, mawt, mūtū qabla an tamūtū.**

mṛityu (S/H) *Lit.* death, decease, demise; a name for the Indian god of death (*Yama*) or, in Buddhism, of *Māra*, also known as *Mṛityu-Māra*.

Indian sacred texts point out that the real Self, the *Ātman*, of which the individual soul or self is a part, is eternally beyond the bounds of death. But while in the body, the soul has a choice – to hanker after the illusion of material satisfaction or to seek the Real, and overcome death:

That Self (*Ātman*), which is free from sin, free from old age (*viḥara*),
 free from death (*vimṛityu*), free from grief,
 free from hunger and thirst,
 whose desire is the Real (*Satya*), whose thought is the Real –
 That is what should be sought,
 That is what one should desire to understand.
 He who has discovered and who understands that Self (*Ātman*)
 attains all the worlds and all desires.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 8:7.1

Present in every human body
 are the two principles of immortality (*amṛita*) and death (*mṛityu*).
 By pursuing delusion, we find death (*mṛityu*);
 By pursuing Truth (*Satya*), we attain immortality (*amṛita*).

Mahābhārata 12, Shāntiparva 169:28, DCS

He indeed is the Protector of the world, . . .
 Overlord of all, hidden in all things,
 in whom the seers of *Brahman* and the deities become one;
 By knowing Him, one cuts the fetters of death (*mṛityu*).

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 4:15

When the Truth has been realized, then the Divine is seen everywhere, even in this world. Otherwise, rebirth beckons:

The immature pursue external pleasures,
 and so get caught in the snares of ever-present Death (*Mṛityu*).

But the wise desire nothing of this world,
 knowing eternity and immortality (*amṛitatva*)
 in the midst of the transient. . .

Whatever is 'here', the same is 'there';
 Whatever is 'there', the same is 'here'.
 He who sees 'here' as anything different
 passes from death (*mṛityu*) to death (*mṛityu*).

By a (pure) mind alone can This be realized:
 then no differences exist 'here'.
 He who sees 'here' as anything different
 passes from death (*mṛityu*) to death (*mṛityu*).

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:1.2, 10–11

He alone – the Eternal – is all that was, and all that shall be;
 By knowing Him, you conquer death (*mṛityu*):
 there is no other path to liberation (*vimukti*).

Kaivalya Upanishad 9

I know that mighty Being (*Purusha*),
 effulgent as the sun, beyond the darkness.
 Only by knowing Him can you go beyond death (*mṛityu*):
 there is no other road for this.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 3:8

See also: **marāṇa**.

mūtū qabla an tamūtū (A), marg pīsh az marg (P) *Lit.* die (*mūtū*) before (*qabla an*) you die (*tamūtū*);¹ die before your death; a *ḥadīth* (traditional saying) attributed to the Prophet, rejected by the Muslim orthodoxy on grounds of uncertain authenticity, but often quoted by the Sufis, where it is understood to refer to *mawt ikhtiyārī* (voluntary death) or dying while living.

‘Ināyat Khān explains that it has a twofold meaning. Firstly, it means learning to leave the body, as in death, and enter the next world while still living in the body:

This path is trodden in order to know in life what will be with us after death. As it is said in the *ḥadīth*, “*Mūtū qabla an tamūtū*” or “Die before death.” To take off this mortal garb, to teach the soul that it is not this mortal (body), but is that immortal being, so that we may

escape the great disappointment death brings – this is what is accomplished in life by a Sufi.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK5 p.47

Secondly, it refers to the death of the individual, illusory self, although the two are parts of the same process:

There is a *ḥadīth*, which says: “*Mūtū qabla an tamūtū*,” which means, “Die before death.” A poet says, “Only he attains to the peace of the Lord who loses himself.”

Seemingly, it is a renunciation, an annihilation, but in truth it is a mastery. The real meaning of crucifixion is to crucify this false self, and so resurrect the true self. As long as the false self is not crucified, the true self is still not realized. By Sufis, it is called *fanā*, annihilation. All the attempts made by true sages and seekers after real truth are for the one aim of attaining to everlasting life.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK7 p.187

Unifying the two meanings, ‘Ināyat Khān relates Rūmī’s story of the caged parrot who asked his owner, a merchant, to give his wild brethren in India a message.² Upon hearing the message, one of the parrots falls from her branch in apparent death. The owner returns with these sad tidings, at which the caged parrot drops off the perch, seemingly dead. But when the parrot is taken out of his cage to be buried, he flies away telling the owner that the free parrot had given him the message, “Become dead like me that you may gain release.”³

Death and dying while living are constant refrains in Rūmī’s writings. He mentions the legend of the biblical Enoch who was taken on a revelatory journey through the inner heavens.⁴ Rūmī exhorts his readers to follow Enoch’s example, for without dying while living, the soul remains “veiled” and in “much agony”:

Commentary on the Prophet’s saying – peace be upon him! – “Die before you die (*mūtū qabla an tamūtū*). O friend, die before your death (*marg*), if you desire life; for by so dying Idrīs (Enoch) became a dweller in paradise before us.”⁵

You have suffered much agony,
yet you are still veiled,
because dying is the fundamental principle,
and you have not fulfilled it.
Your agony is not finished until you die:
you cannot reach the roof without mounting the ladder.

When two rungs out of a hundred are missing,
the climber will be debarred from the roof. . . .

Since you have not died, your agony has been prolonged:
be extinguished in the dawn, O candle of ʿIṣrāz!
Know that the (divine) Sun of the world is hidden
until our (little) stars have become hidden (in Its glory).

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:723 (heading), 723–25, 730–31; cf. MJR6 p.298

In another passage, he counsels choosing such a death as is transformative, so that Reality may be experienced here and now:

O possessor of sincerity, if you want Reality unveiled,
choose death (*marg*) and tear the veil –
Not such a death (*marg*) that takes you to the tomb,
but a death (*marg*) of such transforming kind
that you will go into the Light. . . .

Muḥammad said, “O seeker of the mysteries,
if you want to see a dead man living –
Walking the earth, like living men,
yet dead and his spirit gone to heaven,
one whose spirit has its dwelling place on high at this very moment,
such that were he to die, his spirit would not be translated,
because it had been translated before his death –
Then this can only be understood by dying,
not by the exercise of reason;
Translation it is, but not like the translation
of the spirits of ordinary men:
It resembles a removal from one place to another.

“And if anyone should wish to see a dead man
walking thus visibly on the earth –
Let him behold Abū Bakr, the devout,
who, through being an entirely truthful one (*ṣiddīq*)
became the Prince of the Resurrected (*Amīr al-Muḥsharīn*).
In this life, look at the *Ṣiddīq*,
that you may believe more firmly in the Resurrection.”

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:738–39, 742–49; cf. MJR6 p.299

According to Rūmī, the Prophet cites Abū Bakr, his uncle and close companion, as someone who has reached this spiritual height. This, says the Prophet, is the true ‘Resurrection’. However clever and talented a person may be, says

Rūmī elsewhere in his *Mašnavī*, the only “skill” that counts with God is the ability to “die before death”. For “divine grace depends on dying,” and to die such a death depends entirely on divine grace:

The mystery of “Die before death (*mūtū qabla mawtin*)” is this:
 after such a dying (*murdan*) come the spoils.
 O artful schemer, except such dying (*murdan*),
 no other skill is acceptable to God.

A fraction of divine grace is better than a hundred efforts:
 such efforts are in danger from a hundred kinds of mischief.
 But divine grace depends on dying:
 the trustworthy one (*šiqāt*, the master) has put this path to the test.
 Yet not even his death (*marg*) happens without grace:
 Listen! Listen! Go nowhere without grace!
 Grace is like an emerald, and the ego is like an old viper:
 how can the viper be made blind without the emerald?

Rūmī, Mašnavī VI:3837–42; cf. MJR6 p.469

Elsewhere, Rūmī describes how God has given a “golden treasure” to everyone. This treasure of spiritual realization is the only thing that goes with you beyond the grave. But to take proper advantage of it, you must “die now”:

(God gives you) a golden treasure
 that remains with you when you lie buried beneath the sand,
 and is not left as a heritage.
 It runs before your hearse,
 and becomes your companion in the tomb,
 and in the state where all is strange.
 For the sake of your death day (*rūz-i marg*), die now,
 so that you may be united with everlasting love,
 O fellow servant.

Rūmī, Mašnavī III:3758–60; cf. MJR4 pp.210–11

Hence, one of Rūmī’s many characters and spokesmen decides:

“I will become dead, . . . : to die before death (*marg pīsh az marg*)
 is to be safe from torment.”
 To die before death (*marg pīsh az marg*) is to be safe, O youth:
 even so has Muḥammad commanded us, saying:
 “Die, all of you, before death (*mūtū kullkum min qabla an*),
 else you will die with sore afflictions hereafter.”

Rūmī, Mašnavī IV:2271–73; cf. MJR4 pp.397–98

And concluding a passage explaining how the beauties of this world are a reflection of the divine beauty within, he enthuses:

O happy he that died before death (*marg*):
he received fragrance from the origin of this vineyard.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:1372; cf. MJR4 p.348

See also: **marg**, **mawt**, **mawt ikhtiyārī**.

1. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 352.
2. 'Ināyat Khān, *Sufi Message*, SMIK7 pp.185–87; Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:1547–848, MJR2 pp.85–101.
3. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:1832; cf. MJR2 p.100.
4. See 1, 2 & 3 *Enoch*.
5. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 352.

near-death experience An experience of an other-worldly reality reported by people who have been on the verge of death, but have been revived; abbreviated to NDE; a type of out-of-the-body experience (OBE) often, but not always, associated with the nearness of death, encompassing sensations that include: detachment from the body; a feeling of levitation; great fear; complete serenity, security, or warmth; the experience of absolute dissolution of individuality; and the presence of a light, interpreted by some as a deity or spiritual presence; broadly categorized as an experience that encompasses peace, joy and harmony, followed by insight, and by mystical or religious experience:

I remember being wheeled into the operating room and the next few hours were a critical period. During that time, I kept getting in and out of my physical body, and I could see it directly from above. But, while I did, I was still in a body, but something I can best describe as an energy pattern. If I had to put it into words, I would say that it was transparent, a spiritual as opposed to a material being. Yet it definitely had different parts.

Case Study, in Life After Life, LAL p.52

Some extremely intense NDEs include a perception of events happening in a different time and place, some of which have been corroborated. Such experiences have included awareness of events or conversations taking place during surgery, while the subject was under anaesthesia.

Some people have also experienced extremely distressing NDEs, which can include a forewarning of emptiness or a sense of dread concerning the cessation of their life. Contrary to common belief, attempted suicides do not lead to unpleasant NDEs more frequently than unintended near-death situations.

NDEs are often reported after recovery from being declared clinically dead or from being very close to death, in such circumstances as cardiac arrest, anaphylactic shock, electrocution, coma, cerebral haemorrhage, asphyxia, near-drowning, and so forth:

I ... was admitted to hospital ... I was lying in a pool of blood. The doctor was called and there was a lot of urgent activity around my bed. ... That was the last thing I remembered. Then I was high on the ceiling of the ward looking down upon a bed (which seemed to be a long way down) and saw doctors and nurses around the bed working on the person lying there. I was surrounded by a strong light. I did not go through any tunnels. I was not frightened – in fact, I was very happy, very peaceful, and in awe of the wonderful light all around me. The light was so beautiful – brighter than the clearest sunshine and yet not dazzling. I had never seen such light before and never felt such peace.

Case Study, in What Happens When We Die, WHWD p.64

I can remember so vividly being above and to the right of the bed in the delivery room at the head end in a white-like tunnel; but it was white, absolutely brilliant white.

Case Study, in What Happens When We Die, WHWD p.65

NDEs are also associated with conditions that are not life-threatening, such as extreme anxiety or the shock of a close-call car accident.

Like mystical experiences in general, the content of NDEs is commonly conditioned by the beliefs of the experiencer. However, an NDE typically follows a distinct progression: a sense of having died; pleasant feelings and emotions, including calmness and serenity; a sensation of levitation or floating above one's own body and seeing the surrounding area; being drawn into a tunnel with a strong, bright light or beautiful garden at its end; meeting deceased relatives or spiritual personages; encountering a being of light; receiving a life review; reaching a border or boundary; and a sense of reluctance at being returned to the body:

I knew I was dying and that there was nothing I could do about it, because no one could hear me. ... I was out of my body, there's no doubt about it, because I could see my own body there on the operating table. My soul was out! All this made me feel very bad at first, but then this really bright light came. It did seem that it was a little dim at first, but then it was this huge beam. It was just a tremendous amount of light, nothing like a big bright flashlight, it was just too much light. And it gave off heat to me; I felt a warm sensation.

It was a bright yellowish-white – mostly white. It was tremendously bright; I just can't describe it. It seemed that it covered everything, yet

it didn't prevent me from seeing everything around me – the operating room, the doctors and nurses, everything. I could see clearly, and it wasn't blinding.

At first, when the light came, I wasn't sure what was happening, but then, it asked, it kind of asked me if I was ready to die. It was like talking to a person, but a person wasn't here. The light's what was talking to me, but in a *voice*.

Now, I think that the voice that was talking to me actually realized that I wasn't ready to die. You know, it was just kind of testing me more than anything else. Yet, from the moment the light spoke to me, I felt really good – secure and loved. The love which came from it is just unimaginable, indescribable. It was a fun person to be with! And it had a sense of humour, too – definitely!

Case Study, in Life After Life, LAL pp.62–63

Psychologist and physician Raymond Moody, who is believed to have coined the expression 'near-death experience', includes the hearing of a loud and unpleasant sound or noise as one of the earlier experiences in the sequence:¹

A man is dying and, as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing and, at the same time, feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment, and he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.

After a while, he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he still has a 'body', but one of a very different nature and with very different powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon, other things begin to happen. Others come to meet and to help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died, and a loving warm spirit – of a kind he has never encountered before, a being of light – appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally, to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life. At some point, he finds himself approaching some sort of barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life and the next life. Yet, he finds that he must go back to earth, that the time for his death has not yet come. At this point, he resists; for, by now, he is taken up with his experiences in the afterlife and does not want to return. He is overwhelmed by

intense feelings of joy, love, and peace. Despite his attitude, though, he somehow reunites with his physical body and lives.

Raymond Moody, Life After Life, LAL pp.31–32

Popular interest in NDEs in modern times was initially sparked by Raymond Moody's, *Life After Life* (1975) and his co-founding in 1978 of what became the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) in 1981. NDEs have subsequently been the focus of considerable research, and a large number of books, scientific papers and articles have been written on the subject. Various studies in the USA, Australia and Germany have recorded that between four and fifteen percent of the general population claim to have experienced NDEs,² though the difference may be due to the sample selection, location, timing of the study, and so on. The percentage rises to eighteen percent in a study conducted among cardiac-arrest patients.³

Although the academic and medical world was initially reluctant to research NDEs, since the mid-1970s they have become an increasingly respectable field of study. Dutch cardiologist Pim van Lommel (1943–), having been struck by the number of his own patients who claimed that they had had an NDE, systematically studied NDEs in a wide variety of hospital patients who had survived cardiac arrest. In 2001, he and his fellow researchers published a study covering more than twenty years – the first scientifically rigorous one – in the renowned medical journal *The Lancet*. The publishers of van Lommel's book, *Consciousness Beyond Life*, which is based on this research, claim that it "provides scientific evidence that the NDE phenomenon is an authentic experience that cannot be attributed to imagination, psychosis, or oxygen deprivation".⁴

One of the more enlightening case studies is that of the then thirty-one year old Monique Hennequin, who had two NDEs within a matter of hours. As van Lommel explains, Monique had given birth to her second child by Caesarean section. For a few hours, everything seemed normal, until she began experiencing increasingly intense abdominal pain. Further surgery was required, during which it was discovered that constriction and perforation of the intestines arising from the Caesarean section had allowed the intestinal contents to leak into her abdominal cavity. The resulting high temperature, low blood pressure and multiple organ failure left her critically ill in the intensive care unit, with only a slim chance of recovery. At this point, she suffered a cardiac arrest, followed by her first NDE. The experience was so real and vivid that van Lommel later asked Monique to put it down in writing. At first, she experiences things and events in the hospital, and realizes that she is awakening from the dream of life:

After a final, desperate attempt at moving my body, I gave up. My heart was beating like mad, and even my rapid breathing gave me no air; I felt as though I was suffocating.

This was the time and place; how on earth could my life end here in the intensive care unit? What was to happen to my children, my job, and the assignments that wouldn't be finished, my house? There was so much left unsaid and undone. My God, they didn't even know where my funeral insurance policy was! And the fridge! I had this vision of people coming in after the funeral and the whole rigmarole were over, to clear up, clean the house, open the fridge . . . the stench! (The night before I went into the hospital I had cooked cauliflower, and there were some leftovers in the fridge.)

This was my last conscious thought before I 'went'. The astonishment at being able to exist and perceive outside my body was something I had already experienced during the operation a few days earlier.

The last thing I heard was a long beep from the monitor and an alarm that apparently sounds when you flatline. Suddenly I was in the room next door and saw two nurses rush over to my room and my body. It seemed odd to me that this adjacent room had a monitor and alarm even though it was unoccupied. I felt a smile on the lips of the body I no longer ensouled or inhabited. At the same time I felt the nurses' panic, and I felt deeply sorry for them. I couldn't help it; I appeared to be taken away. And I took my smile with me. Picking up speed, I saw every single room in the hospital, including patients and staff, as well as the past, present, and future of everything that whizzed past me. I knew it! I had often thought to myself: what if life is like a dream, and just as you can wake from a dream you can wake from life? At that point I didn't know yet what lay ahead of me and that I was to see that life is a cycle, just like sleep is a cycle in life. What's more: that this in turn is a cycle in a dimension that would be well beyond my comprehension.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.204-5

Her consciousness now becomes more interior in focus, and she begins to recall events of her life, including an incident as a teenager when she had nearly drowned, and had seen herself when she was six:

Everything went black, and somehow I was relieved because I felt no pain or fear whatsoever. I felt safer than ever, and I had a sense of nostalgia. A childlike innocence and naivety came over me, as if I was going to the movies with Daddy, and at the same time I felt more mature than everything I was leaving behind (including my own life). I didn't feel alone, despite not seeing anything or anyone. Gradually a sense of sight developed around me, like a sphere that I myself was a part of. I seemed to have ended up in the omniverse, as another image formed below me; in fact, it formed around and through me.

I continued to feel protected, by somebody rather than something. It became lighter, and I saw myself enveloped as it were by a situation from my past. I immediately recognized the time and place: underwater at the age of fourteen! I was shocked because I suddenly realized: I've been here before! Exactly there in 1974, when I nearly drowned, I had also seen myself! At the time I thought that I saw myself reflected in the water's surface (from below). What I didn't realize at the time – but did during this experience – was that at the age of fourteen I had seen myself as a six-year-old girl.

It was clear to me now that back then I had also briefly woken up from life. At the time I had regained consciousness on the edge of the pool, lying in a pool of vomit, with a lifeguard on my back. It was very embarrassing, and I repressed the beautiful colours, the peace and quiet, and the excerpts from my youth. Afterward I would occasionally tell people that I had seen myself underwater; I couldn't understand it myself, let alone explain it to others. As usual I thought: the less I say, the easier it will be to fit in with the rest, so I never mentioned it again.

But now, in this situation, I understood that there was no reason whatsoever for my shame, and at the same time I sensed the fear, worry, love, and relief of the lifeguard and some of the bystanders. I also felt the shame and reticence I developed afterward. At that moment I'd felt a connection with 'the Truth', with my origins, and had trouble recovering this feeling in society. From then on I knew that there was something that I didn't know but was desperate to know. Now I was literally dying to know. The strong sense of separation from my Source – which I'd had since the incident – was something I would come to understand even better during this experience.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.205–6

Monique's life review continues, and she becomes aware of the times when she had unwittingly hurt the feelings of others or had overreacted, as well as times when she had brought happiness and joy to others:

The situation made sense to me now, and I proceeded to other situations that had raised question marks in my life. The how and why of my actions became clear to me because I saw, sensed, and knew how people had felt during (and frequently also after) contact with me. I viewed several episodes from my life. I recognized and felt everything as though I had gone back in time and completely in the actual moment.

What had I done with my life? My God, I was my own judge and executioner at the same time. When I realized that I had done something wrong, I wanted to go back to make amends. A bit like rushing

out the door and realizing you've forgotten your bag. No problem, you fetch it, but then back in the street, damn, you've forgotten your purse. You think you're all set, get to the store, and sure enough, you've forgotten your credit card!

I hadn't really done anything wrong, but I felt the pain, the misgivings, the anger, the powerlessness, and the sadness of all the people who felt upset by my words and actions. Actually, it wasn't really something I did to others but (rather I did it) to myself. These people were also reflections of my own pain, misgivings, anger, and powerlessness. I hadn't taken full responsibility for my thoughts, words and actions, and had thus deprived myself of the chance to grow and become more aware. I also saw that sometimes I spontaneously overreacted to some people (usually to my own great annoyance) and that they actually needed it as well. And there I was, feeling unnecessarily guilty over my supposed overreaction, not realizing that people's thoughts and emotions had triggered my unintentional responses and that it was a mirror for them as well. Everything could have been so different by open and sincere communication.

I lingered at those incidents where I had trouble recognizing my responsibility until I was ready to accept it. To everybody I had ever hurt, intentionally or unintentionally, I wanted to explain why and express my sincerest apologies. Nobody condemned me, and at all times I felt this warm support. How could this support love me? Could it not see how naïve I had been in life? And that I had been motivated by ambition, selfishness, fear – and, yes – even by joy or euphoria?

Fortunately, I also saw and felt all the wonderful, happy, rewarding and joyful moments that my thoughts, words, and actions had given others (and thereby myself). Everything was shown simultaneously – my entire life! Some things even made me laugh. I didn't spare a thought for my surroundings and was completely engrossed in my life.

I was the one taking stock, and I didn't come off too badly. I had personally come to terms with everything now; my guilt (or rather my lack of awareness) had become clear through the pain and the acceptance of responsibility. However, I did feel that I owed some people an explanation. If only I could reach them. Why had I said so little in life? Fear. But that fear was completely gone now. Never again would I be afraid of my thoughts and feelings. Never again would I be afraid of being a failure in other people's eyes or of being undermined. I was and always will be my own judge. From now on, I would always be responsible for my own thoughts, words, and actions.

Everything faded, and suddenly, with terrible pain, I was back inside my body. What had happened? For a moment I had some control over my fingers, and I tried to send an SOS in Morse code. I wanted to stay in my body, if only for a chance to say that I was sorry about

certain things. Never again did I want to do and say anything other than what I really thought and felt. If I were given another chance, things would be different. Honesty! It would begin with being open and true to myself.

It was (to) no avail; even if anyone had picked up my signals, they couldn't have stopped or understood what I was going through. Apparently I hadn't understood enough myself. It felt as if I had been taken by the scruff of the neck and been confronted with the facts. The concept of the individual, the need for co-operation, growth, awakening, purpose, the cause and effect of thoughts, words, and actions in human interaction were all clear to me now. But did I really want to continue down this difficult path? Did I really think the world was a worthwhile place to be in? Why couldn't I keep myself alive? Questions, lots of questions, were going through my mind. And once again I felt myself leaving my body. As quickly as I had returned, I was gone again.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.206–8

Her experience now becomes more mystical:

I appeared to be ascending through a spectrum of light, and I recognized colours not by sight but by sense. The colours became lighter, warmer, and brighter and then intermingled, as if to form one big umbilical cord. A soft tornado of all colours – more than I had ever known – came together and blended without any losing their individual identity. The tip of the tornado appeared to be pointed at the earth's atmosphere. I went along and ended up in its 'eye'. Did that mean that I was heavier than the light? Lighter? Every intensity and colour of light appeared to have its own mass and movement. Was I part of this? Did it pass through me, or did I pass through the light? Everything felt diffuse, and I had the impression that I was soaring to the centre of this column.

I sensed and knew instinctively that this force had the shape of an hourglass and that it would expand at some point, become even bigger than the place I had come from. For a moment it was tight, and I thought about the inside of an umbilical cord, about the placenta connecting mother and child; I felt dizzy, and I seemed to be experiencing birth at different levels and in different dimensions. Ascending, descending, entering or exiting places – I could no longer tell the difference, nor did it matter.

Everything around me went black, a warm black, and I realized that pure, warm, soft black is also light, a kind of energy, palpable even without a body. I wondered if it was palpable because it wasn't me who had control over myself or a body, but something else that was a great deal bigger, stronger, and more wise than I could ever be.

I rose up, like being in an aeroplane without side panels (so I could feel the atmosphere around me). Strangely enough, I could neither see nor hear, and yet I perceived everything. I was a part of it, and at the same time I felt enveloped by a protective shell. I rose higher and higher, further away from life and closer to what feels like real existence.

I sensed a hierarchy of the regions or atmospheres I literally and figuratively went through. Every 'layer' had its own atmosphere with distinct boundaries and restrictions. 'Aha,' it flashed through me, 'atmosphere,' and I understood that every 'level' I moved through contained parts of both myself and others....

I was hoping to arrive at the Essence, the purest form of consciousness.... Gradually, the notion of 'enlightenment' began to take shape in me. I had never thought about spirituality, and to my embarrassment I had been known to make fun of it. But from a young age I'd always had many sincere questions, such as, "If there is a God, why are there so many diseases and disasters?" "Why do we make war?" "Is nature God or God nature?" "Are we nature?" ...

As I approached my 'level', I became lighter and happier and felt almost elated about what lay ahead. I seemed to be making a soft landing, and the envelope around me dissolved. The black light cleared like a fog and turned a colour so delicate I still don't know how to describe it. Palpable and all-pervasive; even the finest filter couldn't capture this luminosity. I was amazed that I could see and feel this.

I don't know for how long or short a time I had 'stood' there (and how I could stand there without a body), when I became aware that the light was shot through with another luminescence, emanating from a source somewhere. I was floating along the shore, as it were, and continued to marvel at everything around me, no longer aware that I had no eyes and couldn't really see anything. Slowly but surely I realized that this luminescence consisted of a kind of infinite river of brilliance, like the brilliance of a setting sun reflected in rippling water with little pinpricks of light like small stars. The brilliance was made up of beautiful little globules of light, extremely bright and quite unlike anything on earth. They looked like nuclei surrounded by a body of light. Not literal bodies, but more like celestial bodies or atoms with clearly visible electrons floating past me, close to the ground....

The particles were linked in complementary pairs, which in turn made up an enormous organic spiral. The spirals formed the clusters in the field. I sensed that I could sail or float along with any pinprick of light (particle, being, consciousness, atom, soul, or whatever). All I had to do was 'enter' or join the chain. All communication was wordless (suddenly, I understood the meaning of 'soul to soul'). All

particles, atoms, lights, or celestial bodies understood one another; they knew everything, they were everything! What one half of the pair knew was reinforced by the other half and vice versa; the same applied to pairs and even to strings. The current appeared to be expanding all the time by emitting pulses. All particles were a fraction of an all-encompassing sympathetic force, love, and consciousness (like the support I had felt during my life review or the process of accountability or awareness, except several degrees stronger). Now I understand why some call this God, *Allāh*, *parinirvāṇa*, the happy hunting grounds, the *ākāsha* field, *Asgard*, or whatever. I don't know what to call it. Perhaps simply 'nature'.

A sense of happiness and grace washed over me and glowed deep inside me. I felt privileged to be a part of this. Why me? What good had I done to deserve this? I was very eager to join, be together. Be together with these particles in this current; be one with this immense, wise, creative force. Be together with this all-encompassing consciousness. This is where I belonged! This was no longer the dimension of earth or other spheres, this was more! This was the beginning and the end, this was the Source.

I recognized many particles as belonging to people I had known on earth, including my younger brother, who had died before I was born. However, what I recognized wasn't the complete individual. These were elements, beautiful elements, conscious elements. I didn't recognize them by sight because every single particle was the same – the same colour, light, vibration, consciousness, and level of maturity. The recognition was purely instinctual, like an animal has an instinct. And these particles seemed to represent only the purest or most profound parts of them. Perhaps this is why they resembled elements of a larger whole. All particles possessed knowledge; everything I might want to know, they knew. There couldn't be a single question to which they wouldn't know the answer. And I would know and understand everything as soon as I had become one with this Whole.

Everything! I hesitated at the prospect of becoming one because I knew that once I decided to do so I would never be in a body again. The force of attraction was incredibly strong, but at the same time I realized that if I connected there would be no way back. I was so eager to know and be like this current of infinite wisdom. The questions I'd had in life resurfaced: the reasons behind sickness, disasters, children's suffering, the way the earth and the body worked, evolution, the conflict between Jung and Freud, the clash between religions, gravity, birth, incarnation, relativity – in a word, *life*.

I wasn't even aware that I'd had so many questions and that I'd felt excluded from learning, knowledge, and awareness. Physics was the

first subject I'd dropped in school, because it was way beyond me, and philosophy had seemed an area I would definitely never get my head around. But here and now I had the opportunity to instantly know everything. I saw that knowledge, conscience, intuition, awareness, thoughts, emotions, and the physicality of everything are all connected.

Time did not exist here, and a loving tranquillity suffused the field, the current, and myself; suddenly, for just one moment, I was a fraction just like they were and completely one with them. I don't know if I touched them or they touched me. This moment of eternal omniscience is still indescribable to me. The surge of love and the explosion of information were overwhelming.

The answers I received far outnumbered all the questions I'd ever had. In fact, these were no answers but an all-encompassing oneness and convergence of absolute knowledge. My smile felt bigger than ever, and I was complete as well as perfectly happy and in the place where I belonged.

This time I had not just woken up from my body, my ego and physical life on earth, but from something much, much more profound. I had woken from deep inside my individual consciousness in the Source.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.208–12

At this point, Monique realizes that she wants to share her experience and understanding with others, despite her realization that the experience of eternity and higher consciousness is inexpressible:

It was all so easy, natural and logical within this completeness, but at the same time I knew that I would never be able to express it in words from an 'I', an ego in a physical body. Yet this is what I wanted; I wanted to share this, try to explain how eternal existence and consciousness looks and feels. Impossible, and yet, even if I could reach only one single person on earth and let him or her feel this tranquillity, my return would be worthwhile. I realized that I couldn't stand around here much longer, or I wouldn't be able to return to achieve my goal. I knew everything I needed to know. Even my own 'end'.

The options of staying and returning were clear to me. Past and future were one, as if all opportunities were shown to me at once. I had to take my leave of this conscious oneness, this Source. Nothing that had ever been born or come to maturity or that had died or been destroyed was unfamiliar to me. I made a well-considered choice, and this determined what happened next. A preview, showing me all the opportunities of the life ahead of me, as if it had already been lived, flashed before me. My smile was palpable again, and I was pleased

with the life ahead. I was sorry that I couldn't stay and felt a little guilty, although I knew there was no need, that this was an unnecessary feeling. Naively and intensely happy, I began to wave at the particles (without hands): see you later! I knew that I would be back here at the appropriate time, to become a permanent part of this wholeness. The particles paid no attention; everything was fine. As if this current knew that I had to go back because I made this decision. They did know, and all my future decisions would be right. The flashes of moments from this next stretch of life would come to me regardless of the paths I would travel.

And I was ready now; I really wanted to be on this logical and coherent earth, to be aware and live accordingly. Nature is perfect.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.212–13

Meanwhile, back in the intensive care unit, Monique is successfully resuscitated. She recalls:

With a violent and painful jolt, I returned to an immobile body. It was full of tubes and hooked up to machines that were keeping it alive. Even the oxygen that this body needed was provided by a machine. I heard the regular rhythm of the respiratory pump and thought of the awareness and knowledge I had just come back from.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL p.213

Realizing what she has returned to, Monique is not best pleased. In fact, she manages to bite through the breathing tube in her mouth. She is again resuscitated, the tube extracted with some difficulty, and a second breathing tube is inserted directly into her trachea. At this point she has a second NDE:

I became angry and felt betrayed. I thought that I had been abandoned by the Source I came from and failed to see that I was abandoning this Source (and myself) by seeing it as part of where I came from instead of as part of me.

I wanted to return to this heaven and didn't realize that a single loving thought would let me be part of the whole again. I thought that the only way back was via death, and I began to wonder how I could rid myself of the machinery that kept my body alive. I felt imprisoned in this life and wanted to free myself at all costs. Again I heard the respiratory pump and felt a tube in my mouth, right down my throat. Unlike the rest of my body, my mouth I could move; I tried to swallow and felt the obstruction. There was some – be it minimal – movement. With my jaws and teeth, I bit down as hard as I could

until the intubation tube was severed. I tried to swallow it as quickly as possible. The alarm, the oxygen, the nurses – they were gone in a flash. “Good,” it went through me; “that will teach them not to keep me here. I’m off!” But it wasn’t good; it was neither a good thought nor a good deed, not loving toward nature, God, *Allāh*, *Yahweh*, the Source, toward anyone on earth doing their best for me, and most of all not loving toward myself.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL p.214

On this occasion, however, entering in a different frame of mind, her experience is different:

This time I saw nothing: no colours, no warmth. The soft vortex now looked like a hard, cold funnel. I was confused; where was I supposed to go, what was happening? Contact with all earthly things vanished abruptly, and this was by no means a smooth transition. A sense of panic came over me. I didn’t understand what was happening and what had to be done except that this was damn serious and that I was now at a different ‘layer’ in the atmosphere than last time.

In the distance, very far away, I saw a pinprick of light. The end of the darkness? Was I supposed to go there? Did I want to go there? I looked around me; everything was black – black, quiet, cold, and lonely. I was completely alone. Alone with my thoughts and feelings. The expression ‘godforsaken’ made sense to me now, or whatever name you want to give the All-embracing. It wasn’t as if the All-embracing wasn’t there, but I had obstructed it, as it were. I had built a wall between myself and my heart, between myself and trust, between myself and gratitude, and above all between myself and love. The love of the heart that enables a clear consciousness, peace, health – in one word, everything. My wall cast a shadow over me so I couldn’t see the light. Love and the higher consciousness are in the light; they are the light. And in order to see this, I had to break down this wall. Fear – I was full of fear. I think there’s no bigger wall than fear except perhaps anger, which was still there too. How could I escape this misery? Why did nobody help me? I got more anxious and felt nothing but pain, anguish, grief, and loneliness.

The regret intensified, and I understood that I had made a huge mistake. Why had I not had any faith and patience? I felt deeply ashamed before all the light of which I was part of and from which I had isolated myself. I knew that ‘they’ knew, and I also knew that I wasn’t condemned for it. I felt small, but no longer naïve or innocent. Humble or unassuming, rather.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.214–15

Monique realizes that the path to heaven is reached not so much by death as by “a life filled with faith, trust, love, and gratitude”. But she is uncertain what to do next, and she utters an internal cry for help. At this point, her father (who had previously died) appears, but makes to attempt to communicate with her. Whether this is really her father or a projection of her mind is uncertain, for in her subconscious mind her father would most probably have been someone she would have turned to automatically in times of uncertainty. Her father is moving towards the “pinprick of light” and she knows that she has to make the decision of either returning to her body or moving into the light. Ultimately, her father enters “overwhelming light”, and Monique makes the decision to return to her body:

The decision this time to return to my body on earth was actually the only time that felt like I was ‘dying’. The decision to walk backward and return as quickly as possible seemed inexplicable to me. It was the more painful of the two options, and I knew I would be suffering a lot of pain. Ahead of me everything was good, full of love, warmth, honesty, knowledge, everything I had always wanted here on earth. Then why return to that hell when I knew for sure that what I saw in front of me I would never have on earth?

Actually, it wasn’t about having but about being. I myself should be full of love, honesty, warmth and awareness without wanting or having it from someone or something else. Only when I am these things shall I be able to give and receive them; therein lies the greatest wealth.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.217–18

Monique’s choice was not a reasoned one, but even so, she needs to understand why she has chosen to return:

I realized that I would have to fight not just to re-enter my aching and weak body, but also to rebuild that body to meet my next challenge. I had no time to rationalize my decision. But I knew that it would have been pointless to stay. What is the point of enlightenment if I can’t reach out to others? Sharing knowledge, love, honesty, and awareness – that’s it! I had to reach out to myself (my ego, my ‘I’) and others.

The intention behind the earlier choice I made at my level, ‘my heaven’, came back to me very clearly: “Even if I can only reach one person to feel this, it will be worth all the pain.” As soon as I became aware of this, I felt the connection, the warmth and the support of where I belonged, and I no longer felt isolated and alone. I had reconnected to the source and knew that I needed my body.

Suddenly I was back in my body, rudderless, and this time with a mask over my mouth and nose. Somebody leaned over me, manually

respiring me. I was in pain and longed to be back, but I also knew that I needn't feel alone as long as I kept the connection with the love and gratitude. Strangely enough, this painful decision was also motivated by conscious love. Love for creation, the nature of everything, and consciousness as well as love for myself, because the decision to give up ran counter to nature and creation; in other words, it ran counter to me. Everything remained dark for days, and during the moments when I was aware of my comatose state, I knew that my first experience was a natural one and that my so-called negative experience was an unnatural one that sprang from lovelessness. However, the latter NDE taught me most about love and conscious choices because I had to feel right down to my toes what free will, faith and love can achieve and that I'm always only one thought removed from the source, irrespective of the horrible state I'm in.

At no point during my NDE did I feel that somebody other than myself forced me to do anything. I made all the decisions. That's what made the crucial choice of staying or going back so intensely difficult.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.218–19

Reflecting upon her experience, Monique echoes what mystics of all times have said, that experiences of higher levels of consciousness cannot be adequately conveyed in words:

I will never be able to let anyone see or feel what I perceived or where I was during my NDE. I can only describe what I felt, what I pictured, imagined, and what it signified to me. In other words: what I experienced. Everybody is free to make of this what he or she wants. And everybody will have a different interpretation because everybody attaches different meanings, images, and values to words. I use the words 'picture' and 'image' because that is literally what I do. When I describe something I have witnessed but that can't be seen or experienced on earth – I paint a picture, an image with words; in fact, unless I refer to earthly properties, none of it makes sense. How can I explain something that doesn't exist here or that does exist but cannot be seen? When my soul (consciousness or energy) perceived instantaneously everything that can't be perceived by earthly senses, the 'picture' was clear and complete. There was no need for me to 'experience' or discover it via the faculties of a body in space and time, and to find a rational explanation for it.

Without a body and without time, I wasn't disturbed by my ego or by the function or dysfunction of my brain and memory. And during my pure perception within the Source (the first NDE), I had no

opinion either. I didn't even have an 'I'. An opinion is tied to the ego, and the ego to the body. Without any of this, there was only objective consciousness.

During my negative experience (the second NDE), I was neither complete nor objective. I still had an 'I'. I actually saw that my father was wearing his old raincoat whereas I knew perfectly well that we had got rid of it a long time ago; the very fact that I saw him as a human figure made me doubt my objectivity later. My 'I' only disappeared toward the end, when I felt the oneness from my positive experience again.

Back inside my body, I found it difficult to put everything into words although this had nothing to do with what I had perceived. I often wonder whether everything remains pure when such an experience is put into words because of being back inside a body and dealing with time, the brain, memory, and an ego.

Monique Hennequin, in CBLI pp.219–20

Leaving hospital, Monique finds herself faced with the deepest search of all:

When I left the hospital after my NDEs, the search began. What I had perceived must surely be known here on earth? ... Where was I to look, who could I turn to? Where did science and spirituality meet? What is matter and what is Reality? I practically lived at the library and in bookstores; I recognized all kinds of things, but none of it felt like real 'life'.

The greatest reality for me was there! There where I awoke again and again with a speed far greater than the speed of light. A pure life at spirit level, an energy that surges on and through the earth, through everything! Would I ever be able to feel it here – if only for a split second, so I could feel whole again and no longer isolated from real life? During this brief spell here on earth, I occasionally feel hindered by my body, my physical senses, my thoughts, time in general, and 'my' time. Everything that is visible here on earth feels like a feeble reflection of Reality. The tiniest piece of matter that is as big as the universe and the universe that permeates the smallest known unit – these I find difficult to grasp...

Re-entering a body and staying there was difficult; waking up from earthly life and everyday consciousness happened spontaneously and was as natural as being born. Staying there, in the eternal and endless consciousness, would have been a choice, just like the choice to take the body that I ensouled or inhabited before my death and make it entirely 'my' body again and getting it literally and figuratively going again. Every day I'm happy that I chose the difficult route and that I've

been through this heaven and hell. On a wall in my living room I calligraphied: “What you think matters; in fact, it forms matter” as a daily reminder of the opportunities offered by life. Whether the experiences will feel positive or negative depends on the intention of my heart.

Monique Hennequin, in CBL pp.203–21

The majority of individuals who actually experience an NDE, including both agnostics and atheists, see it as a verification of the existence of an afterlife, and that consciousness can function independently of brain activity. According to their own belief systems, some academic researchers understand NDEs as proof of life after death, while others seek answers in psychology or in the neurological and biochemical activity of the brain. The latter explanation, however, contains many difficulties, not the least of which is how lucid awareness and rational thought can be present at the same time as impaired cerebral function.

In his book published in 2012, American neurosurgeon Dr Eben Alexander (1953–) describes an NDE he experienced in 2008. In the book’s prologue, Alexander briefly describes his distinguished academic and professional clinical career and his scepticism, typical of many scientists, of human beings comprising anything of a higher nature than the brain. However, his outlook was completely changed as a result of his own NDE, which – after a summary of his career – he goes on to introduce:

During those years I also authored or co-authored more than 150 chapters and papers for peer-reviewed medical journals and presented my findings at more than two hundred medical conferences around the world.

In short, I devoted myself to science. Using the tools of modern medicine to help and to heal people, and to learn more about the workings of the human body and brain, was my life’s calling. I felt immeasurably lucky to have found it. More important, I had a beautiful wife and two lovely children, and while I was in many ways married to my work, I did not neglect my family, which I considered the other great blessing in my life. On many counts I was a very lucky man, and I knew it.

On November 10th 2008, however, at age fifty-four, my luck seemed to run out. I was struck by a rare illness and thrown into a coma for seven days. During that time, my entire neocortex – the outer surface of the brain, the part that makes us human – was shut down. Inoperative. In essence, absent.

When your brain is absent, you are absent, too. As a neurosurgeon, I’d heard many stories over the years of people who had strange experiences, usually after suffering cardiac arrest: stories of travelling to

mysterious, wonderful landscapes; of talking to dead relatives – even of meeting God Himself.

Wonderful stuff, no question. But all of it, in my opinion, was pure fantasy. What caused the otherworldly types of experiences that such people so often report? I didn't claim to know, but I did know that they were brain-based. All of consciousness is. If you don't have a working brain, you can't be conscious.

This is because the brain is the machine that produces consciousness in the first place. When the machine breaks down, consciousness stops. As vastly complicated and mysterious as the actual mechanics of brain processes are, in essence the matter is as simple as that. Pull the plug and the TV goes dead. The show is over, no matter how much you might have been enjoying it.

Or so I would have told you before my own brain crashed.

During my coma my brain wasn't working improperly – it wasn't working *at all*. I now believe that this might have been what was responsible for the depth and intensity of the near-death experience (NDE) that I myself underwent during it. Many of the NDEs reported happen when a person's heart has shut down for a while. In those cases, the neocortex is temporarily inactivated, but generally not too damaged, provided that the flow of oxygenated blood is restored through cardiopulmonary resuscitation or reactivation of cardiac function within four minutes or so. But in my case, the neocortex was out of the picture. I was encountering the reality of a world of consciousness that existed *completely free of the limitations of my physical brain*.

Mine was in some ways a perfect storm of near-death experiences. As a practising neurosurgeon with decades of research and hands-on work in the operating room behind me, I was in a better-than-average position to judge not only the reality but also the *implications* of what happened to me.

Those implications are tremendous beyond description. My experience showed me that the death of the body and the brain are not the end of consciousness, that human experience continues beyond the grave. More important, it continues under the gaze of a God who loves and cares about each one of us and about where the universe itself and all the beings within it are ultimately going.

The place I went was real. Real in a way that makes the life we're living here and now completely dreamlike by comparison. This doesn't mean I don't value the life I'm living now, however. In fact, I value it more than I ever did before. I do so because I now see it in its true context.

This life isn't meaningless. But we can't see that fact from here – at least most of the time. What happened to me while I was in that coma

is hands-down the most important story I will ever tell. But it's a tricky story to tell because it is so foreign to ordinary understanding. I can't simply shout it from the rooftops. At the same time, my conclusions are based on a medical analysis of my experience, and on my familiarity with the most advanced concepts in brain science and consciousness studies. Once I realized the truth behind my journey, I knew I *had* to tell it. Doing so properly has become the chief task of my life.

That's not to say I've abandoned my medical work and my life as a neurosurgeon. But now that I have been privileged to understand that our life does not end with the death of the body or the brain, I see it as my duty, my calling, to tell people about what I saw beyond the body and beyond this earth. I am especially eager to tell my story to the people who might have heard stories similar to mine before and wanted to believe them, but had not been able to fully do so.

It is to these people, more than any other, that I direct this book, and the message within it. What I have to tell you is as important as anything anyone will ever tell you, and it's true.

Eben Alexander, Proof of Heaven, PHNA pp.8–10

Eben Alexander then attempts to describe his NDE:

Something had appeared in the darkness. Turning slowly, it radiated fine filaments of white-gold light and, as it did so, the darkness around me began to splinter and break apart.

Then I heard a new sound: a *living* sound, like the richest, most complex, most beautiful piece of music you've ever heard. Growing in volume as a pure white light descended, it obliterated the monotonous mechanical pounding that, seemingly for aeons, had been my only company up until then.

The light got closer and closer, spinning around and around and generating those filaments of pure white light that I now saw were tinged, here and there, with hints of gold. Then, at the very centre of the light, something else appeared. I focused my awareness, hard, trying to figure out what it was.

An opening. I was no longer looking *at* the slowly spinning light at all, but *through* it.

The moment I understood this, I began to move up. Fast. There was a whooshing sound and, in a flash, I went through the opening and found myself in a completely new world. The strangest, most beautiful world I've ever seen. Brilliant, vibrant, ecstatic, stunning... I could heap on one adjective after another to describe what this world looked and felt like, but they'd all fall short. I felt like I was being born. Not reborn, or born again. Just... born.

Below me there was countryside. It was green, lush, and earth-like. It *was* earth... but at the same time it wasn't. It was like when your parents take you back to a place where you spent some years as a very young child. You don't know the place. Or at least you think you don't. But as you look around, something pulls at you, and you realize that a part of yourself – a part way, deep down – does remember the place after all, and is rejoicing at being back there again.

I was flying, passing over trees and fields, streams and waterfalls, and, here and there, people. There were children, too, laughing and playing. The people sang and danced around in circles, and sometimes I'd see a dog, running and jumping among them, as full of joy as the people were. They wore simple yet beautiful clothes, and it seemed to me that the colours of these clothes had the same kind of living warmth as the trees and the flowers that bloomed and blossomed in the countryside around them.

A beautiful, incredible dream world. . . . Except it wasn't a dream. Though I didn't know where I was or even *what* I was, I was absolutely sure of one thing: this place I'd suddenly found myself in was completely real.

Eben Alexander, Proof of Heaven, PHNA pp.38–39

Understandably, Dr Alexander's experience was a turning point in his life, and it is universally true that NDEs can have life-changing effects, not only on those who experience them, but also upon their families and associated medical workers. Changes in values and beliefs often occur after an NDE, including alterations to personality and outlook on life. As Raymond Moody writes:

Later, he (the person who experiences an NDE) tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people. Still, the experience affects his life profoundly, especially his views about death and its relationship to life.

Raymond Moody, Life After Life, LAL p.32

Other changes in outlook include an enhanced appreciation of life, greater self-esteem and confidence, greater compassion for others, a heightened sense of purpose and self-awareness, and a desire to learn more about the nature of the experience. The changes may also include an increased physical sensitivity to, and diminished tolerance of light, alcohol, and drugs.⁵ An important change that has been observed from formal research data is that people who survive near-death encounters "experience a marked reduction of normal death anxiety".⁶

See also: **astral projection** (8.1), **dying while living, out-of-the-body experience** (8.1), **tunnel** (8.2).

1. Raymond Moody, *Life after Life*, LAL pp.11, 19–21, 112.
2. G. Gallup and W. Proctor, *Adventures in Immortality*, AITD pp.183–85; “Different Kinds of Near-Death Experience: A Report on a Survey of Near-Death Experiences in Germany,” H. Knoblauch, *DKND* pp.21–22; “Prevalence of Near-Death Experiences in Australia,” M. Perera, *PNDA* pp.109–15.
3. “Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest,” Pim van Lommel *et al.*, *NDCA*.
4. See dust jacket, Pim van Lommel, *Consciousness Beyond Life*, LBAP.
5. See “near-death experience,” *Wikipedia*, ret. October 2008.
6. See D. Scott Rogo, *Leaving the Body*, LBAP p.170.

’pho ba (T), **saṃkrānti** (S) *Lit.* transference; phonetically rendered as *phowa*; transference or ejection of consciousness; one of the six doctrines of Nāropa; a popular Tibetan Buddhist practice for separating consciousness (*viññāna*) from the body at the time of death, which, when practised as close as possible to the time of death, allows the practitioner to avoid the *bardo* (intermediate) state and to go directly to one of the Buddhist pure lands (heavens), such as *sukhāvatī* (land of bliss), the western pure land of Buddha Amitābha; can also be performed by a *lama* on behalf of a dying person. The consciousness is described as passing along the *avadhūtī* or *sushumṇā* – the central channel (*nāḍī*) of subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) that runs through the spine – and out through the subtle ‘aperture’ in the crown of the head, known in Indian *tantra* and *yoga* as the *brahmarandhra* (door of *Brahma*).

In the Tibetan tantric context, enlightenment means realization of the pure, unborn, primordial, pristine mind or awareness (*rig pa*) – also known as the clear light – that is regarded as the foundation of all mind, all consciousness, and all phenomena. Although originally one of the six doctrines of Nāropa, the practice of *’pho ba* has been adopted by all Tibetan Buddhist schools.

A variant of *’pho ba* – *’pho ba grong ’jug* (resurrection transference) – is also described, by means of which a practitioner is able to transfer his consciousness into a recently deceased body – either human or animal. It is said that this practice was generally used in the event of ‘premature’ death, so that meditation could be continued in a human body. According to *A Book of Three Inspirations*, Tsongkhapa’s classic work on the six *dharma*s of Nāropa, the technique of *’pho ba grong ’jug* was brought to India by Marpa, a disciple of Nāropa and the *guru* of Milarepa (1052–1135). Marpa formally transmitted the instructions to his son, Dharma Dode; but Dharma Dode died unexpectedly while still a young man without having formally passed

on the teachings to a successor, and the authentic lineage came to an end. Nonetheless, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) says that the practice was still taught secretly in the oral tradition. Even today, texts describing the technique still exist, although the authentic lineage of transmission has ended.

The practice of 'pho ba is similar to that of the techniques employed by the *Mahāmudrā* and *Dzogchen* traditions. All three seek realization of the pristine state of primordial mind. In fact, one who has attained that state has no need to practise 'pho ba at the time of death, because he has already realized it. If a realized *guru* or *lama* practises 'pho ba, it is only by way of confirmation of its importance to his disciples.

So that a person is very clear about what to do at the time of death, authorities are agreed that instruction from a suitably qualified master is essential. If a person arrives at the point of death without adequate preparation and guidance, he will be so overwhelmed by the internal projections of his own mind that he will be unable to focus and to know what to do. This is the case with a significant proportion of human beings.

Ideally, for the 'pho ba practice to be fully effective, the dying person should have freed himself from all attachments to the world of *samsāra*, as well as from any unwholesome thoughts or negative mental traits. In practice, attainment of this will vary from individual to individual. Consequently, three degrees of 'pho ba practice are commonly described: *dharmakāya* 'pho ba, *sambhoga-kāya* 'pho ba, and *nirmāṇa-kāya* 'pho ba. Two others – *guru* 'pho ba and pure-land 'pho ba are also described by some authorities. The *dharmakāya* (Reality body), *sambhoga-kāya* (bliss body, celestial body) and *nirmāṇa-kāya* (physical body) constitute the three bodies of a *buddha*. In the context of 'pho ba practice, they relate to the individual's level of spiritual evolution.

Dharmakāya 'pho ba is practised by one who has realized the simple, non-visualizing awareness of the pristine Reality. Tibetan texts also mention various external signs and events that accompany the departure of one who is enlightened. Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (b.1951) explains:

The *dharmakāya* 'pho ba is performed by a person who has received the perfect teachings from a perfect master and has practised them perfectly – in other words, someone who has had the view (perspective, teachings) of either *Mahāmudrā* or *Dzogchen* pointed out and has attained stability in that recognition in this very lifetime. Then, at the moment of death, there is no one moving from one place to any other place; no transference of some concrete thing from one realm to another. One simply merges with *Dharmadhātu* (the *Dharma* realm). Hence, *dharmakāya* 'pho ba is called 'free from transference and (from) something transferred'. It is simply resting in the equanimity of *Dharmadhātu*.

When someone has attained the *dharmakāya* 'pho ba at the moment of death, external signs occur. The sky overhead will be totally clear without a trace of clouds. The internal sign is that the body will not lose its lustre or radiance, nor become bloated or stiff. The innermost signs will be relics, or what is called *ring bsrel*, left behind in the cremation ashes, as well as self-appearing designs, such as the symbol *āḥ*, on the skull or bones, signifying the realization of the non-arising (*i.e.* unmanifested, absolute) *dharmakāya*.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC pp.199–200

Sambhoga-kāya is founded upon the practitioner's stable and focused visualization of himself as his *yi dam* (personal meditation deity). He knows himself to be the pure *buddha*-mind and perceives the world as a *maṇḍala* of his *yi dam*, seeing his *yi dam* everywhere, within and without. At his death, he rises up as the deity. This form of 'pho ba is also said to be accompanied by external signs:

The signs of attaining *sambhoga-kāya* 'pho ba are the appearance of rainbows and different lights in the sky. Regarding the body, a tiny hole on the crown of the head will ooze a little lymph and drops of blood, by a mere touch. The hair around this part will fall out very easily. At times, a protuberance even appears at the top of the head. As the innermost sign, relics of the five rainbow colours and various kinds of images of deities and attributes of the *buddha* families may appear on the bones and the skull.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC p.200

Nirmāṇa-kāya 'pho ba is the practice most commonly performed by ordinary, imperfect human beings. It is founded upon an intricate form of *yi dam* visualization that involves breath control in order to concentrate the mind and focus the subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) in the central channel (*nāḍī*) that runs up the spinal cord connecting the lower *chakras* (subtle life energy centres) to the crown *chakra*. This practice too has certain external manifestations:

The external sign of attaining *nirmāṇa-kāya* 'pho ba at the moment of death is that sunshine and rain will occur at the same time, large raindrops gently drizzling down, called a shower of flowers. The inner sign is a few drops of either lymph or blood dripping from the left nostril, which indicates that the person has departed for the benefit of beings. Many small pill-like objects, *ring bsrel*, will be left in the cremation ashes and, signs like wheels or sword designs will appear on the bones indicating activity for the benefit of others.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC p.200

The details of the *nirmāṇa-kāya* 'pho ba practice vary, but the commonest is that which is related to the celestial *buddhas* Avalokiteshvara and Amitābha. This is to be practised during life, as preparation for the time of death. In common with Indian yogic and tantric texts, the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and lower apertures are described as 'openings', 'doors' or 'gateways', for it is through them that the attention runs out. According to the verses of Karma Chagmey Rinpoche (1613–1678):

Visualize your body to be your *yi dam*,
 the great compassionate one (*i.e.* Avalokiteshvara).
 Imagine that above your head is your master, as Lord Amitābha,
 who embodies all the precious ones, and supplicate him.
 Block each of your eight openings with the syllable *hrīḥ*.
 Within your body is the central channel (*nāḍī*),
 the size of an average bamboo arrow.
 In the heart centre is your mind as a white letter *hrīḥ*:
 eject it repeatedly and dissolve it into the heart centre of Amitābha.
 After that, perform this visualization one hundred and twenty-one times,
 without thinking of anything whatsoever.
 Rest vividly awake in the practice of mind essence.

*Karma Chagmey Rinpoche, Direct Instructions of the Great Compassionate One;
 cf. UMDC p.202*

At the time of death, explains Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, the practitioner should visualize himself as his *yi dam* (meditation deity) Avalokiteshvara, with the celestial *buddha* Amitābha overseeing all:

Think of your body being hollow, made of rainbow light like a tent of light with a single pole inside, a hollow bamboo stick placed as the central channel (*nāḍī*). It is open at the top and closed at the bottom. At your heart centre, it narrows a tiny bit and there is a lotus flower. Above this lotus is a small sphere of *prāṇa*, with the letter *hrīḥ*, symbolizing your consciousness. The *prāṇa*-sphere and your mind are very buoyant and light, like gas, and are ready to fly up. This so-called bamboo tube is also made of light. Narrow at the bottom, it is wider at the top where it opens up at the crown of your head.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC pp.202–3

Dzogchen Ponlop (*b.* 1965), speaking of training in 'pho ba practice during life, in preparation for death, provides further details. First, he says, prevent the flow of consciousness through the outward-opening apertures of the body by 'blocking' them with the syllable *hrīḥ*. By this means, only the aperture in the crown of the head is left open:

First visualize the syllable *hrīḥ* as blocking each of the eight impure gates or orifices (two eyes, two ears, nostrils, mouth, and the two lower apertures) from which our consciousness could exit the body, and which lead to rebirth in a samsaric realm. Next, we visualize the central channel, which extends in a straight line from below the navel to the crown *chakra* at the top of the head. The central channel is visualized as being wide open at the point at which it meets this *chakra*, which is the ninth gate. At the heart centre, in the middle of the central channel, we visualize a red *bindu* (drop) that is bright, shining and transparent like a flame. In the middle of this *bindu*, we sometimes visualize the syllable *hrīḥ*, the same syllable that is blocking the eight gates. At other times the *bindu* alone is enough. Either way, we focus on the *bindu*, which is the inseparability of *prāṇa* and mind. It is said that the *bindu* shines, flickers and sparkles, and sometimes emits sounds, as burning candles occasionally do. We utilize this image so that our minds will be focused more clearly and precisely.

Next, seated on the crown of our head at the opening of the central channel, we visualize the Buddha Amitābha, who is red in colour. During our training sessions, we visualize that Amitābha's feet are blocking this opening, thus preventing our consciousness from leaving our body.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP pp.149–50

Variations in the practice relate to which *yi dam* or celestial *buddha* is being taken as the focus. Sometimes the *bindu* is replaced by a seed *mantra* or the visualization of a tantric ritual implement, such as a *vajra*; but all three represent the subtle mind and its point of focus. He continues:

The training consists of repeatedly sending the *bindu* we have visualized at our heart centre up through the central channel to our crown *chakra*, where it lightly touches the feet of Buddha Amitābha and immediately returns to our heart centre. The rising and falling of the *bindu* is co-ordinated with our breathing. The *bindu* 'rides the breath', so to speak. This is affected by our practice of 'vase' breathing, in which we gently hold our breath, or *prāṇa*, in the abdomen and then release it so that it moves upward through the central channel. When we release our breath, this causes the *bindu* at the heart centre to move upward. What we are doing is working with the upward wind (*vāyu*), which is one of the five primary winds, or *prāṇas*. In forms of the practice that employ the *hrīḥ* visualization, you might actually utter the syllable aloud, "*hrīḥ, hrīḥ, hrīḥ, ...*" while it is ascending. With the utterance of the final *hrīḥ*, the syllable leaps and touches the feet of Amitābha and then immediately descends to the heart centre once

again. Like a ping-pong ball, it goes up and down, up and down. We repeat the full visualization again and again. This is 'pho ba training practice, not the actual 'pho ba for the time of death.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP p.150

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche describes a similar practice:

Details of how actually to do the practice can be obtained individually when one is ready to do the practice itself. Various systems exist. Sometimes, there is a certain shout, like *pha!* or *hik!* or *hrīh!* Then the syllable in the heart flies up and touches Buddha Amitābha's feet where his two big toes are closing the aperture on the crown of the head. He sits above one's head with his feet resting on the crown aperture. The syllable lifts the feet up a tiny bit, but they push it down again so that it doesn't fly out. That's very important. This is repeated many times. The practice can take from one to three weeks, but a good meditator can perfect it very quickly, even in two days, so that a certain sign occurs. People with strong concentration will have a few hairs and a few drops of pus (*i.e.* body fluid, lymph) fly off by themselves. Otherwise, a *lama* or your master can check to see if a tiny opening has been made where a tiny straw could fit. After that, you are assured of being able to perform 'pho ba in the same way at the moment of death.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC p.203

Dzogchen Ponlop adds:

It is sometimes said that the practice of the transference of consciousness can shorten one's life span, since we are working with interdependent phenomena. We are practising ejecting our consciousness and creating a tendency for that to occur. To overcome this, before concluding our session, we visualize the syllable *ham* or a *vajra* clearly blocking the opening at the crown *chakra*. It is important that we maintain that visualization during post-meditation as well. Another means of protecting one's longevity is to visualize at the conclusion of our session that Buddha Amitābha transforms into Amitāyus, the *buddha* of long life.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP pp.150–51

All of this is preparation for the inevitable moment of death. When *nirmāṇa-kāya* 'pho ba is practised at that time,

we visualize that Amitābha is seated about one foot above our head, leaving the opening to the central channel unblocked. We also do not

place any syllable or other obstruction at this orifice. It remains wide open. This time, when shooting the *bindu* or syllable up the central channel, our intention is to cause it to leap with its final movement into the heart centre of Buddha Amitābha, where it dissolves. Our mind becomes inseparable from the heart of Amitābha, which is nothing other than the essence of our own nature of mind. The visualization practices of *Vajrayāna 'pho ba* are simply the means we use at this time to remind ourselves that the enlightened wisdom and compassionate qualities we see in Buddha Amitābha are a reflection of the nature of our own mind. There is no Amitābha waiting for us outside.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP p.151

Traditionally, specific instructions concerning '*pho ba*' have only been given orally, and in many instances this is still the case. In the *Lamdre* meditation system of the *Sakya* school of Tibetan Buddhism, '*pho ba*' is only taught to practitioners who have evolved to a particular degree. Part of the reluctance is that the practice may be used to commit suicide, but generally it is deemed better for a student to practise from the level they have attained rather than to try and handle things for which they are unprepared.¹

It is also necessary to perform the practice only when it is certain that the process of death has commenced. Again, training is required during one's lifetime in order to recognize the signs that indicate the onset of physical death and the accompanying dissolution of the primal elements (*tattvas, bhūtas*):

When do you actually perform this ejection? It is necessary to be familiar enough with the stages of the dissolution process so that you will recognize them. When the early signs appear – the coarse dissolutions of earth into water, water into fire, and so forth – that is the time to prepare. You should be ready. In general, '*pho ba*' should be performed at some point during the stages of appearance, increase, and attainment; that is, after the external respiration has ceased and before the internal respiration ceases. Some instructions state that '*pho ba*' can be done as late as the second stage of the mind dissolution, at the time of increase and the manifestation of the red appearance. Remember that when the red and white *bindus* merge at the heart centre, they encase and squeeze the subtle consciousness between them, and consciousness dissolves completely into space, at which time the black appearance arises and we go unconscious. The inner respiration ceases at this point, and then it is too late.

What happens if we perform '*pho ba*' at the correct time but our practice is unsuccessful? We are still 'there', so to speak, and did not realize the nature of mind. In that case, the dissolution proceeds in

the same way. We have to reinforce our attention and try to maintain awareness so that we will recognize the luminosity that arises in the next *bardo*, the *bardo of dharmatā*.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP pp.151–52

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche describes the process in a similar manner, adding that a master's help is very beneficial, and reiterating the traditional belief that when performed correctly, 'pho ba prevents rebirth in the "three lower realms":

Deliberate 'pho ba or transference is done when we are absolutely certain of having arrived at the moment of death. Different indications signify that death is approaching; certain specific experiences accompany the dissolution of the elements, such as the experience of the earth element dissolving into the water element and so forth. When totally sure that we are about to die, we should perform 'pho ba. Otherwise, to perform 'pho ba before the actual moment of death can result in a very great negative effect.

Ejection of consciousness is of great importance since we can easily do it by ourselves; if necessary, a qualified master can do it for us at the moment of death. If done correctly, even though we have not attained stability in the proper view (*i.e.* realization of *rig pa*), performing this practice and ejecting the consciousness at the moment of death assures that we will not take rebirth in the three lower realms.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, UMDC p.200

Concerning the two, less-common kinds of 'pho ba practice, in *guru 'pho ba*, visualization of the *yi dam* is replaced by visualization of the *guru* above the head. Visualization of the *chakras*, seed *mantras* and so on may also be dispensed with. Pure land 'pho ba involves direct transference of consciousness to one of the heavenly pure lands or *buddha*-realms associated with any of the celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, or *ḍākinīs*. This is related to the practice of dream (*rmi lam*) *yoga*, in which the practitioner learns to project his mind to any *buddha*-realm of his choosing and with which he feels a deep connection.

If death is sudden, then it is understood that 'pho ba cannot be practised. In that case, the recommendation is to think either of one's *guru* or *yi dam*, seeking his help and protection. If a person is unable to attain enlightenment at the time of death, the individual can fall back on teachings and practices concerning the intermediate state (*bardo*) between death and rebirth:

'Pho ba is the transference of one's consciousness into clear light. This is to ensure that when we die we know that we are dead, and can

sustain a state of purity even as the gross elements of the body dissolve. When the consciousness itself is about to leave the body, our mind reaches its purest state. The clear light referred to is the same clear light that people report after near-death experiences. Before ejecting the consciousness some people manage to realize enlightenment. In case this fails, there are teachings on *bardo*, which is the intermediate state of consciousness after we leave this body and wander in limbo.

Lama Choedak Yuthok, Lamdre, LDEY p.167

From a practical perspective, it is unlikely that a person who has passed his life engrossed in material affairs, without a thought for spiritual matters, would be able – or even interested enough – to focus his consciousness within when death arrives. Hence the importance given by spiritual teachers to making adequate preparation for leaving the body at the time of death.

See also: **bardo**.

1. Lama Choedak Yuthok, *Lamdre*, LDEY pp.23–24.

qiào (C) *Lit.* shell, outer covering, crust; figuratively, the human body, as in *tuōqiào* (to shed the shell, also rendered as *tuōkē*). See **tuōkē**.

qíhè (C) *Lit.* to ride (*qí*) a crane (*hè*); a Daoist metaphor that refers to an adept's death to the physical realm and his ascent to spiritual realms while still living in the physical body; synonymous with *chéng hè*.

In his *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir*, master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) concludes with the enigmatic verse:

When husband and wife arrange a tryst,
there is cloud and rain in the bridal room.
In a year they give birth to a child,
who is sure to ride on a crane (*qíhè*).

Zhāng Bóduān, Jīndān sībǎi zì, DZ1081

“Cloud and rain” is a Chinese term for sexual intercourse. Master Zhāng Bóduān is using various metaphors and symbols from the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition to describe spiritual practice and the fruits thereof. These include: the union (harmonizing) of *yīn* and *yáng* (negative and positive, female and male, earth and heaven, *etc.* – the essential duality of creation); the resultant ‘birth’ of the purified spirit; and the ascent of the spirit to higher realms. “In a year” is used metaphorically to indicate the course of spiritual

practice, however long it may be in each individual case. When this period of spiritual refinement is complete, the immortal spirit “soars into the sky riding a crane (*qíhè téngkōng*)”.¹

See also: **chéng hè, hè** (8.1).

1. Liú Yīmíng, *Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě*, ZW266, DS12.

saṃlekhanā (S), **saṃlehaṇā**, **sallehaṇā** (Pk), **sallekhanā** (H) *Lit.* altogether (*sam*) emaciating (*lekhanā*); complete thinning out, scarifying, or reduction; the Jain practice of fasting until death with a spiritual motivation; hence, religious death, ritual death, holy death; voluntary death by starvation; thus, *sallekhanā-vrata* (vow to fast to the death), which may be taken by both mendicants and laity; also called *samādhi-maraṇa* (death in meditation, peaceful death); also known to *Shvetāmbaras* as *santhārā* (deathbed); more common among *Digambaras* than *Shvetāmbaras*.¹

Sallekhanā entails a gradual withdrawal from everything in life; food intake is reduced by increasingly rigorous fasting, and the end is brought about by altogether ceasing to eat and drink. The ‘emaciating’ or ‘thinning out’ is understood not only in respect of the physical body, but also in regard to the passions (*kashāyas*) and one’s *karmas*, which distract the soul from its spiritual quest.

Jain philosophy regards the body and the passions as the means by which karmic matter enters the soul, and *karma* as the only obstacle between the soul and its liberation and innate omniscience. The purpose of *sallekhanā* is therefore to weaken both the body and the passions, so that the soul may rise. This is understood as the focus and intention of life, and the entire life of a Jain mendicant or devout layperson can be understood as a preparation for death. Weakening the body is known as *dravya* (material) *sallekhanā*, and weakening the passions as *bhāva* (inner) *sallekhanā*. Strictly speaking, *sallekhanā* is therefore the process that leads to the end practice of *santhārā* and final death in *samādhi-maraṇa*. Some *āchāryas*, however, such as Umāswāmī, Samantabhadra and Shīvakoti, have used *santhārā* and *sallekhanā* synonymously.²

Some very early texts, like the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* (c. C5th–1st BCE), indicate that *sallekhanā* was only practised by mendicants who were in good health and of sound mind. Indeed, if they fell sick, they were advised to start taking food once again. It was also expected that they would be under the guidance of a spiritual teacher, and would have needed his permission to start the process of *sallekhanā*.³ Later texts, however, such as the *Shrāvaka-prajñapti* (a *Shvetāmbara* text, c. C5th CE) are clear that in those days the practice was not restricted only to mendicants.⁴

There are two ways in which a person may approach *sallekhanā*. When healthy and in good spirits, with time to take the decision with full consideration of what one is about to take on, it is known as *savichāra-maraṇa* (death with due thought). When the decision is made in an emergency, when the probability of imminent death has suddenly become a reality and there is little time for consideration, it is known as *avichāra-maraṇa* (death without due thought).

In many instances, a particular period is set for the entire process, which may be twelve years, twelve months, or twelve fortnights. Varying regimens regarding the gradual reduction of food and so on are recommended by different texts.⁵ The intention is to provide adequate time for the weakening of the body and passions to take place:

After having lived as a *śramaṇa* (ascetic) for many years, a sage should mortify himself by the following religious exercises. The longest duration of the mortification is twelve years; the middle, one year; and the shortest, six months. In the first four years, he should abstain from tasty food; in the second four years, he should keep various fasts. During two years, he should eat *ākāmla* (tasty food) at the end of every second fast; in the following half year, he should keep fasts that are too long. In the second half of the year, he should keep long fasts. During the whole year, he should eat only small portions of *ākāmla*. During the (last) year, a sage should make the ends of two consecutive fasts meet, and should break his fast after half a month or a whole month (until he dies).

Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra 36:249–54; cf. *SBE45* pp.229–30

“Tasty food (*ākāmla*)” pertains to an aspect of some fasting regimens which involve eating only bland or ‘sour’ foods such as simple boiled rice, cereals and pulses, or a gruel made thereof, prepared without the use of oil, spices, ghee, sugar, salt, curds, or any fresh or dried fruit or vegetables. The meaning of “making the ends of two consecutive fasts meet” is uncertain, but has been interpreted to mean either taking or not taking tasty food on ending a fast.

The purpose is to detach the soul and mind from the body and to make the transition into death in a calm, peaceful, and welcoming state of mind. In ancient times, *sallekhanā* was seen as the natural end to the life of a mendicant. Later, it was explained as a gradual easing into death, undertaken by a mendicant or layperson who has a terminal illness or is otherwise already close to death.

Many Jain writers and teachers of the past – with variations concerning the details – have written of the practice, and various circumstances are mentioned as valid reasons to take the vow of *sallekhanā*.⁶ Monks and nuns who have an infirmity that prevents them from observing their vows may also

choose to end their life by *sallekhanā*. For a mendicant, qualifying infirmities include the inability to observe the six obligatory rites (*āvashyakas*), to walk to a layperson's house in order to receive food, to remain standing when eating, and to see well enough to inspect all food items for the presence of living organisms. In the case of the laity, a person gradually withdraws from worldly and family life, finally going to live with a group of mendicants. In earlier times, circumstances such as famine, natural disaster or warfare, when suitable vegetarian food may have been unavailable or when death seemed unavoidable, were also considered to have been pressing reasons for taking the vow. In almost all instances, *sallekhanā* was and is undertaken only after consultation with the individual's *āchārya* (spiritual teacher), who determines whether he or she has the fortitude and strength of character required.

Jain philosophy regards incarnation in a physical body as a rare and priceless opportunity for liberation of the soul from the cycle of transmigration through the elimination of *karma* by means of meditation and ascetic practices. The body is not to be regarded purely as a prison, to be discarded at the earliest opportunity. According to a long account of the subject by Āshādhara,⁷ the vow of *sallekhanā* should only be taken when it is deemed that the spiritual benefits of leaving the body outweigh the benefits of remaining in it. Since an aged or unhealthy body often provokes the onset of negative thoughts, making it almost impossible to observe the vows and practices that help to control the mind, it is deemed better to be rid of such a body rather than to die in such a state of mind. The practice of *sallekhanā* is believed to eliminate *karma* and to reduce the number of incarnations spent in human and other births. If liberation is not attained, at least the soul will be reborn in the heavenly realms (*devaloka*). Āshādhara maintains that if there is an offence against the *dharma* at the time of death, a lifetime of meditation and spiritual practice will be wasted, but if the mind is pure and focused at that time, then the burden even of a multitude of sins is eliminated. Amṛitachandra asserts that only *sallekhanā* will enable a soul to take with it its store of *dharma* and the accumulated merit of a lifetime.⁸

The place chosen for *sallekhanā*, as mentioned in various Jain texts,⁹ can be a temple, a sacred place such as a pilgrimage site or *kalyāṇa-sthāna*, one's own home or lodging, or a desolate place such as the wilderness or forest. A *kalyāṇa-sthāna* is the place of one of the five auspicious moments in the life of a *Tīrthankara*, viz. conception, birth, renunciation, attainment of omniscience, and liberation. The place chosen must be carefully inspected and cleaned of all minute creatures by performing *pratilekhanā* (inspection) and *pramārjana* (cleaning, removing).

Given the importance of this last period of life, the final rites (*antakriyā*) of the person who is about to take the vow of *sallekhanā* are of considerable significance. Again, there are some small variations in the counsel given by the various *āchāryas* of the past, especially between *Shvetāmbaras* and

Digambaras; but all are concerned with inducing the best possible frame of mind for the transition. In his advice to a layperson,¹⁰ Samantabhadra instructs him to set aside all affection, enmity, attachment or desire, and to seek forgiveness from friends and family, confessing all his misdemeanours, great or small, concealing nothing. At the same time, he should tell them that he likewise forgives them for anything they may have done to him. Only having done this is he fit to take the *mahāvratas* (great vows) for the remainder of his life, and to commence the practice of *sallekhanā*. Relinquishing all discontentment, fear and negativity, he should calm his mind by reading the scriptures.

Having taken the *mahāvratas*, he should begin the fasting process, which has three phases – reducing by degrees his consumption of solid foods, fatty fluids, and then acidic fluids – until all food and fluid intake has been given up. If the weather is very hot or if afflicted by certain illnesses, he may continue drinking water almost until the very end.¹¹ During this process, he should keep his mind concentrated upon the *pañcha-parameshthins* (the five classes of beings deemed worthy of worship), occupying his thoughts with repetition of the *pañcha-namaskāra mantra* (invocation of the five *parameshthins*), until he eventually leaves his body. To create a conducive atmosphere at the last moments, Āśhādhara instructs that all present should stand in meditation in the *kāyotsarga* posture while the *guru* whispers final words of inspiration and exhortation in the ear of the dying man:

Vomit forth unbelief and imbibe pure religion, make firm your faith in the *Jinas*, have joy in the *namaskāra*, guard the *mahāvratas*, overcome the *kashāyas*, tame the sense organs, and by yourself see yourself within yourself.

Āśhādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 8:68–69, *SDAM*, in *JYMS* p.169

Hemachandra also emphasizes that the final moments should be focused on meditation – on repetition of the *pañcha-namaskāra mantra*, on concentration upon the *chatuḥ-sharaṇa* (four refuges), on the *anuprekshās*, in fact upon all aspects of *ārādhana* (worship). At this time, counsels Hemachandra, he should be especially vigilant and steadfast against the assaults of negative influences.¹²

Various texts, such as the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*,¹³ as well as the writings of Jain teachers like Āśhādhara, Samantabhadra, Devagupta, Haribhadra, Hemachandra and others, have expanded at length on those things that can be regarded as infringements of the vow of *sallekhanā*.¹⁴ These include desire for rebirth as a human being, especially for a well-placed life as a human being with attendant wealth, fame, and the opportunity to indulge in sensual pleasures; desire for rebirth as a god, especially as one holding sway over lesser deities; desire to die because of the discomfort of the process

or because one is receiving no adulating visitors; desire to continue living because one is receiving adulating visitors; desire for or recollection of previous sensual pleasures and comforts; and recollection of loving friends and the happy times of one's life. Fear of death, the pangs of death or of the process of *sallekhanā*,¹⁵ as well as the request for food are also mentioned as infringements of the vow.¹⁶

The *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* and some other texts speak of three kinds of *sallekhanā*, identified by their degree of rigour, although the meaning of the original texts is not entirely clear, and the interpretations of later Jain writers and commentators vary. Having made the ritual confession (*ālochanā*) to his *guru* in the presence of other monks, the votary takes the *sallekhanā* vow. The first kind of *sallekhanā* is *bhakta-pratyākhyāna-maraṇa* (Pk. death by rejecting food and drink), in which the monk is permitted to move about, with assistance if necessary, and can accept the help and services of others:

He should move to and fro, contract and stretch (his limbs) for the benefit of the whole body; or (he should remain quiet as if he were) lifeless. He should walk about, when tired of (lying), or stand with passive limbs; when tired of standing, he should sit down. Intent on such an uncommon death, he should regulate the motions of his organs.

Āchārāṅga Sūtra 1:7.8.15–17, SBE22 p.76

The second degree, *ingīnī-maraṇa*, imposes significant restrictions on moving about (Pk. *ingīnī*). The monk should be staying at one place and can attend to his own needs, but should not accept the services of others. The third, *pāvogamana-maraṇa* (Pk. seeking death), is even more restrictive. Having chosen and very carefully inspected an area of bare ground where even grass shoots are absent, and having removed all small creatures that could otherwise be harmed, the monk lies down and thereafter remains entirely motionless, enduring all discomforts, even if insects start to bite and eat his flesh. He neither attends to his own needs, nor permits others to render him any service. The Prakrit *pāvogamana* (S. *prāyopagamana*) is often incorrectly said by Jain commentators to have its origins in the Sanskrit *pādapopagamana*, which implies to remain unmoving like a fallen tree (*pādapa*).¹⁷

Jains distinguish *sallekhanā* from suicide. They point out that suicide is done in private, out of despair and the inability to face life, and leads to *akāma-maraṇa* (fruitless death), which is the death of a fool or spiritually ignorant person (*bāla-maraṇa*). *Sallekhanā*, on the other hand, implies planning and taking control of the transition from life to death in order to consciously free oneself from bondage to the body. It is regarded as *sakāma-maraṇa* (fruitful death), which is the death of a wise man (*pañḍita-maraṇa*), undertaken with a spiritual intention. Because of the evident occasion for criticism of the practice by others, some Jain *āchāryas* have defended *sallekhanā* against the

charge of suicide in their writings. Pūjyapāda, for instance, observes that the process of *sallekhanā* is entered into without any of the passion (*rāga*) arising from hatred or delusion, which is present in the minds of those who take their own lives. Suicide, by whatever means, is regarded as violence (*hiṃsā*), which is against one of the fundamental principles of the Jain way of life.¹⁸

In the past, those who ended their lives by *sallekhanā* were commemorated by memorials (*nishidhi*); and archaeological findings suggest that *sallekhanā* was originally practised only by mendicants. At Shravaṇa Belgola in the state of Karnataka, located near an ancient Jain pilgrimage site, hundreds of inscriptions dating from the seventh to the tenth centuries are found on memorials of mendicants who ended their lives by *sallekhanā*. Only from the tenth to fifteenth centuries are laypeople honoured in this manner. Commemorative inscriptions of this nature are less common after the twelfth century and are a rarity after the fifteenth century.¹⁹

Sallekhanā is still practised in present times. A survey in 2006 indicated that around 200 Jains in India practised *sallekhanā* or *santhārā* every year. They come from all socio-economic backgrounds, and a higher proportion of women than men take the vow.²⁰ Since suicide is a crime in India, and the police are authorized to arrest, charge and force feed those who endeavour to take their own lives, attempts have been made to justify *sallekhanā* legally on the grounds that it is not suicide. On August 10th 2015, however, a human rights activist brought a case before the Rajasthan High Court, arguing that *sallekhanā* is suicide, and as such should be treated as illegal. The Jain community argued that such a ruling would be in violation of India's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. The Rajasthan High Court ruled that *sallekhanā* is not a primary tenet of Jainism, and banned the practice, making it a punishable offence like other forms of attempted suicide. The result was been large, peaceful and nationwide protests by Jains in various Indian states, including Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Delhi.²¹ In Lalitpur (Uttar Pradesh), which has a high Jain population, 10,000 people from the Jain community shaved their heads in protest.²² As a result of petitions filed by members of the Jain community, on August 31st 2015, the Indian Supreme Court ruled against the decision of the Rajasthan High Court and lifted the ban on *sallekhanā*.²³

See also: **marāṇa**.

1. For many of the details in this entry, see "sallekhanā," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW; R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, JYMS pp.166–72; T.K. Tukol, *Compendium of Jainism*, CJTT pp.275–81; T.G. Kalghati, *Jaina View of Life*, JVLK pp.153–60; Dalpat Singh Baya, *Death with Equanimity*, DECC.
2. See Dalpat Singh Baya, *Death with Equanimity*, DECC.
3. *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* 1:7.8.1–3, 11, SBE22 pp.74–76.

4. *Shrāvaka-prajñapti* 382, SPAU, in *JYMS* p.166.
5. E.g. *Maraṇavibhatti*, *Nishīthacūrṇi*, *Pravachana-sāroddhāra Vṛitti*, *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, *Vyavahāra Bhāshya*, *Vṛihadvṛitti*; in *DECC*.
6. E.g. *Tattvārtha Bhāshya* 7:17, *TSCS* p.95, in *JYMS* p.167.
7. Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 8:1ff., *SDAM*; see also Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:149, *YSHB* p.755; in *JYMS* p.172.
8. Amṛitachandra, *Purushārtha-siddhyupāya* 175, *PSAS*, in *JYMS* p.171.
9. See e.g. Devagupta, *Navapada-Prakaraṇa* 129, *NPLD*; Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:150; in *JYMS* p.167.
10. Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrāvakāchāra* 5:1ff., *RKSS*; Devagupta, *Navapada-prakaraṇa* 131, *NPLD*; in *JYMS* pp.167–68.
11. Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 8:1ff., *SDAM*, in *JYMS* p.169.
12. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:151ff., *YSHB* pp.757–61, in *JYMS* p.167.
13. *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* 1:7.8.1–24, *SBE22* pp.75–78.
14. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* pp.170–71.
15. Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrāvakāchāra* 5:8, *RKSS*, in *JYMS* p.170.
16. Devagupta, *Navapada-Prakaraṇa* 135, *NPLD*, in *JYMS* p.170.
17. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* p.166; cf. Devagupta, *Navapada-Prakaraṇa* 129–35, *NPLD*, in *JYMS* p.166; *Āchārāṅga Sūtra* 1:7.8.7–21, *SBE22* pp.75–77.
18. Pūjyapāda, *Sarvārthasiddhi*, on *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:22, *TSSP*; see also Amṛitachandra, *Purushārtha-siddhyupāya* 175–80, *PSAS*; Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 8:7, *SDAM*; in *JYMS* p.171.
19. See “sallekhanā,” *A to Z of Jainism*, *AZJW*.
20. “Over 200 Jains embrace death every year,” *Express India*, *JDEI*.
21. See “sallekhana,” *Wikipedia*, ret. August 29th, 2015.
22. Arindam Ghosh, “10,000 Jains shave head to protest Santhara ban,” *Times of India*, August 23rd 2015, timesofindia.indiatimes.com, ret. August 29th 2015.
23. Krishnadas Rajagopal, “Supreme Court lifts stay on Santhara ritual of Jains,” *The Hindu*, March 28th 2016, thehindu.com, ret. April 2017.

saṁsthāra (Pk), **santhārā** (H) *Lit.* bed, deathbed; from the Sanskrit *saṁstāra*; specifically, the final period of *sallekhanā* (voluntary death through fasting); used synonymously by *Shvetāmbara* Jains with *sallekhanā*. See **saṁlekhanā**.

shahīd (A/P) *Lit.* witness, sign, mark; evidence, testimony; witness, attester, testifier, martyr; one who bears witness to the cause of Islam by giving his life for it; one who dies in *jihād* (holy war); hence, *shahādah* (martyrdom); in Sufism, one who eradicates his lower self (*nafs*) in pursuit of the Divine;

also, the sign, mark or prevailing characteristic of a seeker's heart, such as knowledge (*'ilm*) or ecstasy (*wajd*) – that which bears witness to his heart, that which is present in his heart; Muḥammad, and by extension other saints and prophets, who are witnesses of God, bearing witness both of God and of the deeds of human beings; also, as *al-Shahīd*, God, the Witness who sees all things; from the same root as *shahādah* (declaration of faith), *mushāhadah* and *shuhūd* (witnessing, contemplation), *mushāhid* (witnesser), *mashhūd* (the one witnessed), and so on; a common term in Sufi literature, with a wide spread of meaning.

In its sense as one who gives his life for the cause of Islam, there are many *ḥadīth* that encourage and commend martyrs and martyrdom, where the belief that such martyrs go to paradise is clearly stated and reinforced.¹ The *Qur'ān* also endorses and encourages physical martyrdom. In a militant passage concerning a recent battle in which the Muslims had suffered a heavy defeat, it says:

Think not of those who were killed in the cause of *Allāh* as dead. They live, finding their sustenance in the Lord.

Qur'ān 3:169; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

And even more explicitly:

God has purchased from the believers their lives and possessions, and has promised them the garden (*al-jannah*, i.e. paradise) in return. They shall fight in His cause, slay and be slain. Such is the binding promise which he has made them in the *Torah*, the Gospel and the *Qur'ān*. And who is more faithful to His pledge than God? Rejoice then in the bargain you have made. That is a supreme achievement.

Qur'ān 9:111; cf. AYA, MGK, KPA

In Sufism, however, the real martyr (*shahīd*) is regarded not as he who loses his physical body, but as he who annihilates his lower self (*nafs*) in the quest for God. R.A. Nicholson observes, “The true martyr (*al-shahīd al-ṣiddīq*) is he who has attained to *fanā fī Allāh* during his life on earth.”² Javād Nūrbakhsh writes, “Sufis call the one slain by God a martyr (*shahīd*) and his station martyrdom (*shahādat*).”³ Rūzbihān says much the same:

Whenever God slays the one He loves with the sword of yearning and union, casting him upon the carpet of His Beauty, the lover becomes alive in God with God's life. Once God has been discovered, he can never be annihilated. The *Qur'ān* states, “Rather, they are alive with their Lord.”⁴

Al-ʿĀrif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “The martyr (*shahīd*) is someone who is slain with an arch glance from God’s splendour.”

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 19:27, MARB p.307; cf. in SSE5 p.93

Rūmī expands on the subject, speaking first of those who died as martyrs, but were far from pure, and whose impure minds (*nafs*) survive bodily death. By contrast, there are those lovers of God who have killed or annihilated their *nafs* while they still live in this world. The body lives on, but it is now under the command of the eternal soul, for the lower mind, the *nafs*, has died:

Truth consists in giving up the soul (to God).
Hark, try to outstrip the others in the race!
Recite from the *Qurʾān*, “men who have been true”.⁵
All this dying is not the death of the physical form:
 this body is only an instrument for the spirit.

Oh, there is many an imperfect one
 whose blood has been shed externally,
 but whose *nafs* escaped alive to yonder side.
Its instrument was shattered, but the brigand remained:
 the *nafs* is alive, but its mount has bled to death. . . .
If everyone whose blood is shed became a martyr (*shahīd*),
 an infidel killed in battle also would be an Abū Saʿīd.

Oh, there is many a trusty martyred (*shahīd*) *nafs*
 that has died in this world,
 yet still walks about like the living.
The brigand spirit (the *nafs*) has died,
 but the sword (the body) is still in the hand of that warrior.
The sword is the same sword, but the man is not the same man:
 the outer form is confusing you.
When the ego (*nafs*) has been transformed,
 this sword, namely, the body,
 is wielded by the hand of the beneficent One.
He is a man whose food is entirely love:
 the other is as inwardly empty as dust.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:3820–23, 3825–30; cf. MJR6 pp.229–30, in SPL pp.185–86

Such martyrdom opens up the gateway to divine and eternal life. Portraying the seeker as the “true believer”, he points out that other martyrs find no such comfort in death:

To the true believer, martyrdom (*shahīdī*) is life:
to the hypocrite, it is death and corruption.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II: 1076, MJR2 p.277

The theme of the lover being slain by the divine Beloved is common in Sufi poetry. The Beloved is a ‘jealous’ lover, demanding that all sense of self and ego be annihilated before the consummation of divine love can be experienced in complete union. Rūmī tells the story of a prince (the lover) who is unintentionally killed by an arrow shot by his greatly beloved father, the king (the Beloved), “whose heart was like an ocean”. In the story, the prince’s love was still marred by ego, and his martyring signified the divine Beloved’s slaying of the ego, the covering or “skin” over the soul. After this death, writes Rūmī:

The pale-cheeked martyr (*shahīd*) was thanking God
that it (the arrow) had smitten his body,
and had not smitten that which is real (the soul).
The visible body is doomed to go at last:
that which is real shall live rejoicing forever.
If that punishment was inflicted,
yet it fell only on the skin:
The lover went unscathed to the Beloved.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI: 4872–74, MJR6 p.527

Sa’dī writes that no one but a “martyr”, a mystic lover who has sacrificed his self to the divine Beloved, feels completely comfortable about leaving this world:

No one leaves the world without regret
save the martyr (*qatīl*) to love,
slain by an arrow from the Beloved’s bow.

Since your departure, nothing else has occupied Sa’dī’s mind;
Is there anyone else in the world
who can take the Beloved’s place there?

Sa’dī, Badāyī’ 20:9–10, KSSS p.349; cf. BOS p.24

Ibn al-Fāriḍ explains that to “live well” – to realize the mystic source of life – means to “die in love” – but that is not an easy option:

If you want to live well,
then die love’s martyr (*shahīd*);
And if not, well,
love has its worthy ones.

Not to die in love
 is not to live by love:
 Before you harvest honey,
 you must surely face the bees.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Dīwān 185, Lāmīyah 5–6, DFQM p.134, SVSL p.37

See also: **jihād** (8.4), **mawt**, **mawt ikhtiyārī**, **shāhid** (7.1).

1. E.g. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:2.35, 4:52.54, 4:52.72, 4:53.386, 4:59.377, *passim*, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 20:4635, 20:4651, 20:4678, *passim*, *HSM*; *Ḥadīth Sunan Abū Dāwūd* 14:2493, 14:2515, *passim*, *HSD*.
2. R.A. Nicholson, *Commentary on Maṣnavī* V:3826, *MJR*8 p.299.
3. Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Sufī Symbolism*, *FNI*5 p.89, *SSE*5 p.93.
4. *Qurʾān* 3:169.
5. *Qurʾān* 33:23.

shījiě (C) *Lit.* emancipation (*jiě*) from the corpse (*shī*); release or liberation from the physical body.

The concept of *shījiě* suggests a method of transcending mortality that cannot be adequately explained; and accounts of *shījiě* are often anything but clear about what really happens. In general Daoist use, the term may refer simply to dying and therefore to being released from the physical body. At other times, it can refer to an ancient type of transcendent ‘transformation’ or ‘ascension’. Deaths of this nature are mentioned in texts from the *Hàn* period (206 BCE – 220 CE),¹ in which an individual either does not actually die, or dies a conventional death but leaves no body behind. In the latter case, no corpse is found in the coffin; rather, some artefact is discovered in its place such as an item of clothing, sandals, a talisman, a sword, a staff, a stick, some hair, or sometimes a weightless husk like the sloughed-off exoskeleton of a cicada. In many cases, the adept becomes ill, feigns death, or disappears either before or after burial. Sometimes, the adept is later seen fully alive, always in a distant place, and usually with a different name. Master Gě Hóng (C4th) names such people as *shījiě xiān* (corpse-freed immortals) and ranks them as the lowest of three kinds of immortal (*xiān*).²

The *Shàngqīng* school of Daoism (*estb.* C6th) adapted the understanding of *shījiě* by relating it to *nèidān* (inner alchemy) methods of transformation and sublimation of the body and body energies. From this perspective, *shījiě* is a form of miraculous posthumous transformation that takes place when an adept has died without having sufficiently spiritualized his body. For as long as the body is unable to ‘ascend to heaven in broad daylight (*báirì shēngtiān*)’, it remains in its coffin for the process of spiritual purification to permeate all of its parts. The adept may then choose to appear or disappear,

transforming himself at will. Only when the spirit is finally liberated does he have the power to escape and go beyond the body – eventually ascending to spiritual realms.

See also: **liànxíng** (8.5), **shēnwài shēn** (8.2).

1. E.g. *Lièxiān zhuàn*, DZ294.
2. Gě Hóng, *Bàopǔzǐ nèipiān*, DZ1185 2:11a, JY144, JEMS p.76.

sǐ (C) *Lit.* to die, death. Although Daoism adopted a Buddhist-inspired model of reincarnation in the early centuries CE, the traditional Daoist view of death is somewhat different, and is integral to the Daoist understanding of birth.

Daoism recognizes death to be an expression of the natural process of ceaseless transformation and change in the universe; death and birth are inevitable consequences of natural law. Alternation between the two is as constant and continuous as the sequence of night and day. According to the *Zhuāngzǐ* and the *Dàodé jīng* (both c.C3rd BCE):

Life and death (*sǐ*) are predetermined;
Like the constant succession of night and day,
established by the decree of heaven. . . .
When life comes, it cannot be avoided,
when it goes, it cannot be prevented.

Zhuāngzǐ 6, 19

A squall does not last all morning,
a sudden shower does not go on all day.
What causes these? – Heaven and earth (*tiāndì*).
So if nature (*tiāndì*) cannot make such intermittent things last long,
how much less can human beings?

Dàodé jīng 23

Yet the Daoist understanding of birth and death is not merely that of an isolated beginning and end to an individual life. Rather, birth and death are understood as the expressions of different stages or phases in the transformation of the same one energy. According to the *Dàodé jīng*:

Emerging at birth is entering death (*sǐ*).

Dàodé jīng 50

And likewise the *Zhuāngzǐ*, more expansively:

Life (*shēng*) is a journey towards death (*sǐ*); death (*sǐ*) is the forerunner of life. But who understands the laws that govern them? Life is the coming together of life energy (*qì*). When it comes together, there is life; when it disperses, there is death (*sǐ*). Since birth and death (*sǐ*) are a journey from one to the other, what is there to worry about?

The ten thousand things (*i.e.* everything) are all one (*yī*). What is pleasing (*i.e.* life) is considered magical and wonderful. What is displeasing (*i.e.* death) is seen as malodorous and putrid. Yet the malodorous and putrid is again and again transformed into the magical and wonderful, and the magical and wonderful is again and again transformed into the malodorous and putrid. Hence it is said, “Everything under heaven is nothing but one Energy (*yīqì*).” Therefore the sages always cherish the One (*yī*). . . .

Human life between heaven and earth is like glimpsing a white colt through a crack in a wall – a white flash and it’s gone. Pouring forth, it overwhelms, as everything emerges. Easily and silently, everything returns once more. By transformation, there is life; by another transformation, there is death (*sǐ*). Living things grieve, human beings mourn; but it is only the release of the heaven-lent bowstring, the emptying of the heaven-lent quiver – a yielding, a small change, and the soul (*hún*) and vital spirit (*pò*) are on their way, the body (*shēn*) following after, back at last to the great Returning.

The formless moves to the realm of form; the formed returns to the realm of formlessness. This all human beings understand. But it is not something to be gained by trying (to understand). Everyone discusses it; but those who have reached it do not discuss it, and those who discuss it have not attained it. Even the most intelligent will not discern it. Therefore, be silent, cease discussion. The *Dào* cannot be heard, so it is better to block your ears than try to listen (to the discussion). This (finding the *Dào*) is called the great attainment.

Zhuāngzǐ 22

According to a story related in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, four (probably fictitious) adepts who have been considering the matter simultaneously declare:

“He who knows that life and death (*sǐ*), being and non-being, are all a single body – I will be his friend!” The four men looked at one another and smiled. There was no disagreement in their hearts, and so the four of them became friends.

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. CTW p.84

Understanding death to be no different from life, Daoist sages are untroubled by death. Illustrating this viewpoint, the *Zhuāngzǐ* goes on to relate two

stories concerning the same four adepts and their untroubled acceptance of change and death. It is again evident from the conclusion that death is not being regarded as the end of existence, but as a transition to another state of being. In the first incident:

Master Yú suddenly fell ill. Master Sì went to ask how he was. “Amazing!” said Master Yú. “See how the transformative process is making me all crooked! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points to the sky. It must be some dislocation of the energy (*qì*) of *yīn* and *yáng*!” Yet he seemed calm at heart and unconcerned. . . .

“Do you resent it?” asked Master Sì.

“Why, no! What would I resent? . . . I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. I am content with this time and dwell in this order, so neither sorrow nor joy can touch me. In ancient times, this was called the ‘freeing of the bound’. There are those who cannot free themselves, because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever resist the heavens: that is the way it has always been. What would I have to resent?”

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. CTW pp.84–85

And according to the second story:

Master Lái suddenly became ill. Gasping and wheezing, he lay at the point of death (*jiāngsǐ*). His wife and children gathered round in a circle and began to cry. Master Lí, who had come to ask how he was, said, “Shoo! Get back! Do not disturb the process of change!” . . .

Master Lái said, “A child, obeying his father and mother, goes wherever he is told: east or west, south or north. And *yīn* and *yáng* – how much more are they to a person than father or mother! Now that they have brought me to the verge of death (*sǐ*), if I should refuse to obey them, how perverse I would be! What fault is it of theirs? The Great Clod (*dàkuài*, i.e. the *Dào*) burdens me with form, labours me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death (*sǐ*). So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death (*sǐ*). When a skilled smith is casting metal, if the metal should leap up and say, ‘I insist upon being made into a sword like the Mòyé!’¹ he would surely regard it as very inauspicious metal indeed. Now, having had the audacity to take on human form once, if I should say, ‘I do not want to be anything but a human being! Nothing but a human being!’, the transformative process would surely regard me as a most inauspicious sort of person.

“So now I think of heaven and earth as a great furnace, and the transformative process as a skilled blacksmith. Where could he send me that would not be all right? I will go off to sleep peacefully, and then, with a start, I will wake up (in another form).”

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. CTW p.85

The Daoist sage or true man (*zhēnrén*) is only concerned with the One, the *Dào* – to transcend the otherwise inevitable sequence of birth and death by means of spiritual practice, and to enter the immortal realm of no birth and no death:

The true men (*zhēnrén*) of ancient times knew nothing of the love of life (*shēng*) or the hatred of death (*sǐ*). Entrance into life gave them no joy; exit from it awakened no resistance. With equanimity, they came and went. They did not forget what their beginning had been; they did not enquire what their end might be. They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death) and returned (to their state before life). Thus there was in them what is called the lack of any mental resistance to the *Dào* and of any human attempt to provide assistance to heaven. Such were they who are called true men (*zhēnrén*). Being such, their minds were free of all thought; their demeanour was still and unmoved; their foreheads beamed simplicity.

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. TT1 p.238

To know (*zhī*) others is wisdom (*zhì*):

to know (*zhī*) the self is enlightenment (*míng*).

To master others needs force:

to master the self needs strength.²

He who knows contentment is rich.

He who is determined will not fail.

He who does not lose his centre will endure.

He who dies (*sǐ*) yet lives will live forever.

Dàodé jīng 33

According to the traditional Daoist perspective, one may achieve conscious participation in a post-mortem existence, but this is not necessarily the case – the subtle spiritual body must be activated in order to be transformed into a transcendent spiritual being. According to *nèidān* (inner alchemy), this is accomplished by engaging in the practice of transformation, sublimation and transcending of the physical in order to attain spiritual immortality.

In pursuing their worldly existence, many human beings are spiritually dead, since leading a self-centred life is to be separated from the *Dào*.

Spiritually minded people, on the other hand, aim to die to the physical in pursuit of an inner spiritual life.

Early Daoist practitioners reputedly lived a simple and carefree life. Having as their objective mystical union with the *Dào* while living, they developed forms of meditation designed to transcend the physical.

Knowing the *Dào* and the real nature of life and death, the Daoist practitioner accepts and welcomes physical death as a natural process. With an understanding of the nature of spiritual transformation and an acceptance of death, practitioners may free themselves from the anxieties of living and dying – a calm mind facilitating their spiritual departure from the physical plane.

Though many people fear death, the true Daoist does not. Seeing death as a natural transition, he thinks equally of his death as of his life. This Daoist attitude is illustrated by another story from the *Zhuāngzǐ*:

When Zhuāngzǐ went to Chǔ, he saw an old skull, all dry and parched. He poked it with his carriage whip and then asked, “Sir, were you greedy for life and forgetful of reason, and so came to this? Was your state overthrown and you bowed beneath the axe, and so came to this? Did you do some evil deed and were you ashamed to bring disgrace upon your parents and family, and so came to this? Was it through the pangs of cold and hunger that you came to this? Or did your springs and autumns pile up until they brought you to this?”

When he had finished speaking, he dragged the skull over and, using it for a pillow, lay down to sleep.

In the middle of the night, the skull came to him in a dream and said, “You chatter like a rhetorician and all your words betray the entanglements of a living man. The dead (*sǐ*) know nothing of these! Would you like to hear a lecture on the dead (*sǐ*)?”

“Indeed,” said Zhuāngzǐ.

The skull said, “Among the dead (*sǐ*), there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores throughout the four seasons. With nothing to do, our springs and autumns are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could possess no greater happiness than this!”

Zhuāngzǐ couldn’t believe it and said, “If I got the Arbiter of Fate to give you a body again, make you some bones and flesh, return you to your parents and family and your old home and friends, you would want that, wouldn’t you?”

The skull frowned severely, . . . and said: “Why would I throw away more happiness than that of a king on a throne and take on the troubles of a human being again?”

See also: *línsībùqiè*, *marāṇa*.

1. A famous sword commissioned by King Héliú of Wú (r.514–496 BCE).
2. *Dàodé jīng* 33; cf. *TTCE* p.35.

tuku wairua, karakia wehe, whakaheke (Mo) *Lit.* spirit (*wairua*) release (*tuku*), freeing the spirit; separation (*wehe*) incantation (*karakia*); to cause to descend (*whakaheke*), to let down; a Māori soul-dispatching ritual, performed to ease the passage of the *wairua* of a dying person into the spirit world; an incantation or charm recited over a dying person or corpse prior to burial, to separate or loosen it from its material existence and assist the spirit (*wairua*) to ascend to the spirit world or descend to the underworld of *Rarohenga*, thus helping it depart from its former home and journey on to the spirit world. *Wehe* means ‘to detach’, ‘to divide’ or ‘to separate’ and *tuku* ‘to release’, ‘to let go’ or ‘to set free’, the latter invoking the idea of transfer. By abbreviation, the incantation is also known simply as a *wehe* or *tuku*. A *tuku* charm or incantation was also used at the time of giving birth, especially if the birth was a difficult one.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) observes that the purpose of the dispatching ceremony is to prevent the spirit from remaining in this world and disturbing or frightening the living, and to prevent the living from trying to follow the departed to the spirit world:

The belief that the *wairua* (spirit) of the dead possesses power to injure, or at least harass, the living was the origin of the peculiar rite called *tuku wairua*. This ceremony was performed over a person as the breath of life left his body, or soon after, its object being to cause the flitting spirit to proceed direct to the spirit world. The charm recited in order to dispatch the soul is called both *tuku* and *wehe*.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.41

Discussing Māori beliefs concerning the spirits of the departed, Best writes:

The spirits of persons who have died violent deaths are the most active. In some such cases, a portion of the blood of the defunct one would be obtained, and over this would be recited a formula to lay the spirit, either to confine it to its burial place or to dispatch it to the spirit world. Spirits of the dead are said by some to have remained in the vicinity of their former homes until such time as the *karakia wehe* had been repeated over the dead, when they fared forth on their way to the spirit world.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.43

He also describes the ritual in greater detail:

As death drew near, the Māori partook of his final meal, the *ō matenga* or food for the journey of death, the last drink of water taken by him being known as the *wai o tanepi*. In his last moments, the breath is said to cause a slight movement of the nostrils as it passes from his body – as the Tahitians say, the *wairua* keeps fluttering about the lips during the pangs of death. White has left us a note to the effect that, among the Ngā Puhi folk, a charm (*karakia*, incantation) termed a *whakaheke* was repeated over the dead in order to facilitate the descent of the soul to the spirit world.¹ Taylor stated that a charm called a *whakaheke* was employed in order to enable the spirit to ascend to the heavens. Shortland, in his *Maori Religion and Mythology*,² gives a charm to enable the *wairua* to reach the heavens. The object of this ceremony was to dispatch the soul to the spirit world, to dispose of it, lest it remain about its former abode and so distress the living. In some districts the act is called *tuku wairua* or soul dispatching, and in others *wehe* (to separate). Some natives state that spirits of the dead remain about their old homes until the *karakia wehe* has been recited over the dead. A charm styled *tuku* was repeated by the Moriori folk over their dead.

When the *wehe* charm was recited over the dead the parents or other near relatives might chant a brief farewell to the dead. The following is a specimen of such farewells:

Farewell, O my son!
Grieve not, weep not;
Give not way to affection and yearning forever.
Fare you well, depart forever.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.82–83

The *karakia whakaheke* cited by Richard Taylor reads:

Alas! This is the turning over,
the severing of the link of life.
The turning over that you
may join the many, the multitude,
and the *ariki* (nobility) gone before,
and ascend the road to heaven.

*Whakaheke karakia, in Te Ika a Maui; cf. IMNZ p.220 (n. *)*

Elsdon Best continues his description:

After this the *kirimate*, the near relatives of the dead, would cut their hair short using sharp flakes of obsidian or shells for this purpose. In some cases a long lock of hair would be left on the crown of the head, to which some attached the skin of a dog's tail with its long hair, and this swayed to and fro as the wearer moved. In some parts a long lock was left on the side of the head. Laceration of the skin was also practised, and much blood was so shed.

"When a Māori died, then a formula was carefully recited so that the *wairua* might proceed direct to the *Rēinga*." Such were the words of an old native in long past days. A brief northern note is to the effect that, when a person died, a lock of his hair was cut off as the *tuku wairua* charm was being recited, but there is no explanation of why the hair was cut or as to what became of it. In some cases when a person knew that his end was close at hand he would say to his relatives – "*Tukua au* (dispatch me)," meaning that someone should recite over him the *tuku wairua* or 'soul-dispatching' formula.

Hammond related to me an interesting story concerning an old age-worn couple of the west coast. These old folks were trudging along a path leading to a distant village when the old man was called. He said "It is well." But his wife was seriously disturbed, for there was no person nearby to recite the *tuku*. Said she: "O sir! Who will dispatch you?" Then seeing but one way out of the difficulty, she cried: "Ah well, I will dispatch you." And so the old woman lifted her voice and chanted the magic words that cause the soul of man to pass from the world of life to the spirit world.

Taylor remarks in his *Te Ika a Maui* that a raw *taro* (*Colocasia esculenta*, a tuberous vegetable) was placed in the hand of the dead before the *tuku* formula was recited.³ This shows that the ceremony was sometimes performed after death.

In cases of severe illness among the Moriori folk, it was believed that the *wairua* left the body of the sufferer, and so a charm was recited in order to bring about the return of the spirit; after which, should the soul-bereft one (*i.e.* the sufferer) sneeze, it was known that his *wairua* had re-entered his body.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.82–84

The Māori do not seem to have been dogmatic in their beliefs, with variations existing between individuals as well as the various tribes:

The evidence as to *wairua* of the dead remaining in this world is very contradictory, if we include popular beliefs. The *whare wānanga* teaching was that the soul of a dead person remained in this world for just so long a period as had elapsed between the birth of the

person and the fall of the *pito* (umbilical cord). Popular belief varied; some held that the soul would not depart until the *tuku wairua* ritual had been recited; and in fact each person seems to have believed what he pleased in regard to these matters. But ever the dread of ghostly apparitions lay heavy on the Māori mind. The expressions “*tini o parangēki*” and “*tini o puhiaata*” are applied to the multitude (*tini*) of spirits in the subterranean spirit world, the charges of the ex-Dawn Maid, (*parangēki* and *puhiaata* being categories of spirits).

Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB p.15

A *karakia wehe* could also be recited by a *tohunga* (priestly expert) over a married couple desiring divorce (*toko*), in order to detach their affections and emotions of the heart. The chant called for the separation of the pair in sleeping, eating, sitting and moving, recalling the separation of *Rangi* and *Papatūānuku*, and included a brief charm recited in former times in order to cure blindness. *Rangi* and *Papatūānuku* are the Sky Father and Earth Mother. They represent the primal duality who were initially bound together in a tight embrace in the primordial Void until their separation resulted in the spreading of light, by which means the creation came into existence.

The divorce ceremony took place at the *wai tapu*, the sacred stream or pool where rites were performed. A mixture of red ochre and water would be smeared on the face and breast of the subjects while an incantation was chanted. The priest would then form two small mounds of earth or sand at the waterside, and standing with a foot on each mound would then strike the surface of the water with a small branch as he intoned another formula.

See also: **awe** (►1), **mate**, **wairua** (8.1).

1. Best leaves this observation unreferenced, and a diligent search has failed to find it among Taylor’s voluminous writings.
2. Edward Shortland, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, MRMS pp.44–45.
3. Richard Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui*, IMNZ p.220.

tuōké, tuōqiào (C) *Lit.* to shed (*tuō*) the shell (*ké, qiào*); to moult, to discard one’s outer form, as in ‘to shed one’s outer shell and fly off like a cicada’; in Daoism, to discard the mortal body and escape from the physical realm, either temporarily while still living (*i.e.* in meditation) or by physically dying, at which time the spirit is liberated from the body.

The *Sacred Treatise on the Great Mystery* (c.1200 CE) discusses the objective of the Daoist practitioner:

Our goal in the mortal realm is to get rid of desire and attachments so that, when we die, we can shed the bodily shell (*tuōké*) and liberate the spirit from the dust of the world.

Tàixuán bǎodiǎn, DZ1034, NEL (1:3.4) p.87

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) uses the origin of the metaphor to convey a spiritual message:

A caterpillar is encased in a woven cocoon. A tadpole is enclosed in an egg cell. When the time comes, a butterfly emerges from the cocoon and a frog develops from the egg cell.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of the transcendent transformation of the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*).

Those who cultivate the Truth (*xiūzhēn*) integrate their physical and mental faculties and merge with the Ultimate, combining with the one Energy (*yīqì*) into an undifferentiated whole, neither distinguishing nor discriminating. The spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) is then manifested, like (the butterfly emerging from) the cocoon that encased the caterpillar or the (frog from the developing) egg cell that enclosed the tadpole.

Spirit (*shén*) is in repose and energy (*qì*) is concealed. Out of utterly undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghuǎng hūhū*) and deep and impenetrable profundity (*yǎoyǎo míngmíng*), a drop of spiritual root grows from elusive to apparent, from tender to strong. When the time comes, and the work is done, all of a sudden the emptiness is annihilated, the pure and clear spiritual body (*fǎshēn*) is revealed, transcending the three realms. It is like a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly, breaking away from its cocoon and flying up; like a tadpole transformed into a frog, leaping and springing forward, in a body that exists beyond the body (*shēnwài yǒushēn*), to another world.

So those who have attained the *Dào* are often referred to as those who are ‘transformed with wings to soar (*yǔhuà fēishēng*)’ or have ‘broken away from the coverings (*tuōké*)’ to become true. Both expressions mean that out of the physical body there grows a body of Truth (*zhēnshēn*). This body of Truth (*zhēnshēn*) is inherent in everyone. It exists in everyone, but people are deluded by the world in which they live, are deceived by illusory thoughts, so they do not recognize it even if it is right in front of them.

Recognize it and cultivate it with perseverance. Then, substance is produced from no substance, form is produced from no form, transcending and transforming into an immortal with a strong, enduring, and indestructible body.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Elsewhere, master Liú Yīmíng notes that only a small number of people acquire this ability. Even of those who consciously seek the *Dào*, it is a rare person who has actual experience of it. The way to do this is to transcend the individual “self (*wǒ*)” that arises at the transition point between the spiritual and the physical:

The *Dào* must be learned. If you do not learn it, how can the great awakening (*dàjué*) return? ... Strengthen the root of life at the gate where the self (*wǒ*) is born. Break away from the thick covering (*tuōpí ké*) at the door where the self (*wǒ*) dies. Countless are the number of people on the road of birth and death – yet, how few are able to understand (the processes of) creation and transformation (*zàohuà*)?

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Likewise, the unknown author of the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th) likens the emergence of the refined spirit from the physical body to the hatching of a white grub from an egg and the subsequent emergence of an adult dung beetle from inside a ball of dung where it had been placed by its mother. According to folklore, the transformation comes about through the “focused attention” of the mother dung beetle:

A dung beetle rolls a ball of dung – in which something white grows by the simple exercise of focused attention. If a dung ball can incubate eggs (*tāi*) that (eventually) emerge from their covering (*qiào*), how could focusing the attention on the dwelling place of the celestial mind (*tiānxīn*) not manifest the (true) self?

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 2, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, fl.C16th) recommends seeking the guidance of a master, whose instructions should be followed diligently if a seeker wishes to escape from the body (“lose your shell”, *tuōké*) and “ascend to heaven (*fēishēng*)”:

The ancient sages say that, no matter how intelligent you are, you should not try the methods of training on your own, by searching for enlightenment through books and writings without the guidance of an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*).... When the teacher appears, you should humbly ask the teacher for guidance. You must practise diligently and not abandon your training along the way. When the training is complete, you will be summoned and will lose your shell (*tuōké*) and ascend to heaven (*fēishēng*).

Shuǐjīngzǐ, Qīngjīng jīng (24) túzhù; cf. CSTM p.154

tuōqiào (C) See **tuōké**.

‘urs (A) *Lit.* wedding, marriage, wedding festival; also, and more commonly, a South Asian ceremony celebrating the death anniversary of a Sufi saint, generally held at the *dargāh* (shrine, tomb) of the saint; usually conducted by the custodians of the shrine, often including the singing of *qawwālīs* or *kāfīs*, especially those of the departed saint.

An annual ‘urs is held at the shrine of the father of the mystic Bulleh Shāh, in Pandoke Bhattiyān (Pakistan), where Bulleh Shāh’s *kāfīs* are sung. In Ajmer (Rajasthan, India), an annual *urs* in memory of the mystic Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī (*d.*1236), founder of the *Chishtīyah* order of Sufis, is held in the seventh month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Attended by thousands of pilgrims from India and abroad, the celebrations last over six days, and include night-long *qawwālī* sessions.

When used for the celebration of a saint’s death, ‘urs refers symbolically to the state of union – the divine marriage – attained during his lifetime and consummated at the time of his death.

See also: **dargāh** (7.5), **qawwālī** (8.4), **spiritual marriage** (8.1).

